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12

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PYOTR PAVLENKO

HAPPINESS

(Continued) [1]

CHAPTER FIVE

On New Year's Eve, Varvara Ogarnova brought Voropayev his regular invalid rations and his mail. Just before she drove up to the gate, she reined in the horse and sat, astounded at the scene in Tsimbal's yard.

The old man was hacking away merrily at the colonel's artificial limb with a chopper, while Voropayev, hopping around with the aid of a bamboo stick, implored him to leave him the metal frame at least.

"He's left me without a leg to stand on! Stop it, I tell you!" he shouted, roaring with laughter at the same time and keeping at a safe distance from the furious Tsimbal, who flourished the chopper and intoned:

"That's what you get, you young pup! You can go on your hands and knees for all I care! That's what you get!"

"Kind regards from the peaceful populace!" Ogarnova called out, and whistled like a cattle thief. "Fight to the bitter end!" and she gave Voropayev a significant look to come out to her, not caring to enter Tsimbal's fighting zone.

"What's got into him?" she asked casually, as she cracked sunflower seeds with her teeth.

"The devil's in him," Voropayev replied, panting in exertion. He held out his hand to her. "I ought to have gone back to work long ago, but he won't let me."

He did not open the letters from the front, but selecting the little folded three-cornered note from Sophia Ivanovna Zhurina, plunged into it as into a fairy dream.

Sophia Ivanovna wrote him (at first he did not believe a word of it), that she had obtained a loan for him from the bank, repaired the roof, bought window glass, dug up the whole yard—"for a garden or anything you like,"—had got hold of an iron gate, hauled enough limestone to build a shed, got three hundred strawberry plants, found a wolfhound pup somewhere, and was now asking timidly what his future plans were—had he changed his mind and thought better of keeping house in partnership with her or not? With the utmost discretion she informed him that she had already warned the supervisor of the kindergarten that a very responsible person's little boy (that was exactly how she worded it) was expected shortly from Moscow, and that her granddaughter Tanya could hardly wait to see her new playmate. The weather in the region of their house appeared to be, according to Sophia Ivanovna, much better than anywhere else in that street. She assured him that the wind from the mountains by-passed the house and the sea fogs dispersed before they got anywhere near it. Furthermore, she swore that this house and garden of theirs had far more sun than those of their neighbours, and consequently, their fruit and vegetables were bound to have a much better flavour.

"But my Lena has got quite out of hand with her work in the Party district committee office," Sophia Ivanovna wrote confidentially, "and as regards the house all she will say is 'I'm not the mistress here, you and the colonel are partners, I'm only your tenant.' Well, I'm making this tenant of mine work her rent: she digs the garden on her days off."

The long and short of it was that his houses were coming through one after another like wisdom teeth.

He had made a mistake, of course, in getting demobbed. A political worker

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of the regular army, speaking two foreign languages and with so much war experience behind him, was needed in the army more than ever now, when it would be stationed in Europe for years and the soldiers who had come to Berlin from the banks of the Irtysh or Amu-Darya had to be taught what to do there.

He stretched out his hand for the letters from the army, but was afraid to open them. Their contents were already familiar to him. As he shut his eyes and saw the pleasant faces of old friends, his heart contracted and everything around him went dim and wearisome. Oh, to be out there! Damn it all, why couldn't he be out there?

"I'm going, I'm going to clear out of here, I can't stand it any longer!" then suddenly he remembered the state he was in, and struck the table with his fist.

"Were you calling me?" Opanas Ivanovich asked him peaceably from behind the partition. "You treat my house like a pub—you just thump on the table instead of calling me."

"Don't take offence, Opanas Ivanovich, it was only that my troubles got the better of me for a moment."

"You ought to tidy yourself up a bit, the folks will be coming."

"What folks?.. Ah, yes, of course, it's New Year's Eve! What an awful memory I've got!"

And the words struck a painful chord in his heart, as though the holiday did not promise joyous hopes but only disillusionment and wrongs still more bitter than those he had experienced. And yet—Victory was plainly visible beyond the New Year, and that was no joking matter.

"But how can I walk, now you've smashed up my wooden leg?"

"I broke it because we'd ordered a new one for you. A New Year gift. Take it! You ought to appreciate our affection."

And Opanas Ivanovich brought out from behind the partition an excellent artificial limb made by a well-known craftsman inventor. The collective farm had sent specially to the regional centre for that artificial limb.

On New Year's Eve Voropayev and Tsimbal were invited to Maria Bogdanovna's sanatorium for children, about three kilometres from the collective farm. There was to be a celebration around the New Year tree.

Maria Bogdanovna was a friend of Opanas Ivanovich's. He had attended to her vineyard, and in general, as he expressed it, had been consulted about everything.

The day before yesterday they had received invitations drawn by the children on bits of newspaper. They could hardly refuse to go, and besides, what was the sense in the two of them staying at home when they could be with people and share for an hour or two universal human hopes and expectations.

They started off while it was still light, so as to be able to take their time over the walk.

The landscape was greatly changed since the days when Voropayev had first taken to his bed. Then everything had been a russet gold, radiant and luxuriant with thousands of joyous hues, even when the sun was not shining. Now nature was a uniform brownish-grey, sharply outlined as though seen through a stereoscope. There was a play of changing perspectives, and through the thinned woods new landscapes could be glimpsed, these in their turn revealing sea and cliffs, and beyond them the sky. It was all nebulous, transparent, elusive. Evening was fast closing in. Night fell almost at once.

Strange indeed was that southern New Year's Eve, balmy, fragrant with the almond smell of the long since withered but not yet fallen flowers of the medlar trees.

The sea was out of sight, but one was aware of it in the distance from the free flow of air and absence of the sharp contours so familiar and reposeful to the eye. Into that misty emptiness of sea, now as inaccessible as the sky, plunged and vanished all sounds, clouds, and stars.

The day before yesterday there had been a thunder storm, the lightning had been fierce and terrible, and the downpour had been as deafening and hollowly echoing as only summer rain can be in the hottest months. Yet the mountain ridges had remained deep in snow, and the effect of the lightning, glancing off the leaden-grey snows, pierced here and there with the green needles of the gnarled pines, solitary at this height, had been strange and weird.

"Still a true Russian can't do without snow," Voropayev broke out with a laugh. "I was never very keen on our frosts, but now I dream about snow, and hear the trees crackling in the frost, and the moon shining like the great porthole into another world. It's wonderful."

"I seem to find myself at home, no matter where I go," Tsimbal said. "Give me mountains—I can get used to them. Give me the sea—and I won't be lost there, either. A Russian, as I understand him, Alexei Vitaminych, is a kind of artist among peoples."

"That's very well put—a Russian is an artist among peoples. Yes, he can express and feel everything, he is capable of understanding other peoples' life and culture, while remaining true to himself. You put it wonderfully. The reason why we're so exacting and make such demands on ourselves is because we are an artist people."

Maria Bogdanovna, knowing that it would help them find their way, sent Anya Stupina and some of the little girls out to meet them.

They clustered round the two men, tumbling over one another in their eagerness, oh-ing, gasping, and apologizing, and then singing, led them to the house.

The fancy-dress ball was in full swing when, rather embarrassed by coming late and the hundreds of curious eyes turned on them, they entered the hall, the centre of which was occupied by a large pine, decked out with home-made toys and standing in cotton wool.

A long line of children in fancy dress filed into the hall. Someone cried: "One, two, three!" an accordion struck up, and the children sang with great enthusiasm, though they had not quite mastered the tune:

> Now the tired Old Year
> Has run his twelve-month race,
> And a gay young child
> Has come to take his place.

The column was led by a healthy looking, big-hipped girl with a gilt paper new moon in her thick, elaborately puffed hair.

"She ran away twice from a German concentration camp," the omniscient Tsimbal informed Voropayev.

Behind the girl, a boy of about thirteen came dancing. His right sleeve was empty. He was dressed as a Caucasian mountaineer, and wore a long black cotton-wool moustache, a cap made of an old squirrel muff, and a cloak of a white Turkish towel.

The next was a tiny "doctor" of about six, in a tall white cap with a red cross, and a white coat with a stethoscope sticking out of the pocket. Horn-rimmed spectacles without any glass in them gave him something of a scholarly air. Behind the "doctor" came a little girl dressed as a moth, with wings made of wire covered with medical gauze dyed red with streptocide, then a "Ryazan peasant woman" in a wide linen skirt and bast sandals, a "tankman" in oilcloth boots, a "Don Cossack" with red stripes down the sides of his short trousers, mounted on a wooden horse which for some reason had large whiskers, then a "cook" with her frying pans, and "Alexander Nevsky" in armour made of the tinfoil from chocolates.

It was all so touching, so sweet, and contrived out of such narrow resources that the tears rose to the eyes from some strange and poignant joy. What did one want with riches, anyway?

The grownups were ranged along the walls, wiping their flushed faces, narrowing eyes that were unnaturally bright as they silently looked on at the procession of children.

The impression that the supervisor, Maria Bogdanovna Merezhkova, made, was of a thoroughly sound person—in every respect. Her strong legs firmly supported a very sturdy figure with arms as developed as an athlete's. She had a brisk way of walking, as though she was marching to a music she alone could hear.

"We've been waiting and waiting for you," she said reproachfully, taking Voropayev by the arm to lead him somewhere. "The children are longing to see you, but as you're so late, I can only show you a few of them."

As they emerged from the reception room, they went through a dark, glassed-in gallery to the further rooms, where they could hear the radio.

"These are my philosophers," she said, opening the door.

No one had warned Voropayev of where he was going and what he was to see, and so he winced involuntarily when he found himself in a room where five

maimed children lay in beds moved close to the table. A concert from Moscow was coming in over the radio, and the listeners looked up, none too pleased at being interrupted.

Maria Bogdanovna made a gesture, asking them to switch off the radio, but evidently they did not understand at once, and while this dumb conversation was going on, Voropayev had time to look around him. In the nearest bed a girl of thirteen or fourteen was lying, propping her face on a fingerless hand. Her eyes were a vivid blue, beautifully drawn as in a picture, her face, delicate and thoughtful, framed in dark chestnut hair. At first glance she had an elusive resemblance to Vrubel's painting of the poet Lermontov's Tamara, but this literary comparison proved erroneous. There was nothing romantic about the girl. She was wholly artless. Beside her, nearer to the loudspeaker, stood a bed that seemed only half occupied. A very short boy, or, it would be more exact to say, a part of a boy was lying in it, head downwards. Voropayev had just time to perceive a shock of hair, a thin neck, shoulders too narrow for his age, and a pencil the boy held in his teeth, thus trying to draw something in a sketch book. Guessing suddenly why the child had so strange a body, Voropayev turned red and looked away. But in that quiet room filled with the strains of music the eye had nowhere to rest. Now he saw a boy who had no legs, sitting up perkily enough, like a white mushroom, at the very edge of the table. It was clear that he was the leader of the group, and it was with him that Maria Bogdanovna was talking by means of signs and asking him to turn down the radio a bit. The fifth bed was occupied by a boy who was either totally blind or had very bad sight. He lay there, his hand shading his eyes, hidden behind blue glasses, and did not seem to have noticed the guests.

"I've brought Comrade Voropayev to see you," Maria Bogdanovna announced in the tone of a teacher, "you've been wanting to see him and talk to him for a long time. Won't you sit down, Alexei Veniaminovich?"

He settled himself in a chair, rather noisily and awkwardly because of his new artificial limb. All the children turned towards him, looking him up and down, as grownups might, with so cold an appraisal that he fancied a chill running down his back.

"We know you already, Comrade Voropayev," the little girl with the blue eyes began. "We've been told a lot about you. Have you heard anything about us?"

"No, I must admit, I've heard nothing at all about you, and I'm to blame for this. . . ."

"It's all the better, I think," the girl broke in, tossing back her hair with a nervous gesture and revealing her beautifully-modelled brow. She was obviously agitated because, as Voropayev guessed, she acted as spokesman.

"It's a very good thing that you didn't know anything about us beforehand, because then you'd have come in looking different, with a sad face, sad in advance. We don't often see gay people, you know—at least, what I wanted to say was, even gay people feel sad and dull with us."

Voropayev realized that no word that was not the truth must be spoken here.

"Well, your company wouldn't be likely to upset me," he said, "I'm nearly in the same boat as you are, and if you count all my internal ailments, then you can cut the 'nearly'. Please introduce them to me, Maria Bogdanovna."

"We'll do it ourselves!" the girl cried, trying to close the expressive little fingerless hands. "I'm Zina Kuzminskaya from Smolensk. My father was a partisan. The Germans came and demanded that I should point out where he was. I refused. Then they put my fingers on the edge of the table in our room and. . . But the most idiotic thing about it was—they were looking for some other partisan and not my father, as it turned out. . . ."

She stopped to take breath, considering that she had said enough about herself, and passed on to her neighbour, the boy with the short body.

"This is Shura Naidyenov, 'Roly-Poly', we call him, he's the head of us, because it's harder for him than anyone else. He was hurt in an air raid."

Roly-Poly jabbed at the paper with his pencil in some irritation and said softly:

"Get on to someone else."

"He has neither arms nor legs, he can read and write, holding the pencil in his mouth, and turning the pages of a

book with a rubber band, and he can even move a little. . . He's been chosen as our monitor because he can do far more than we can.

"The boy at the radio is Petya Bunchikov. The Germans chased him and his father and mother across a mine field. He lost his legs. The boy in the spectacles is Lenichka Kovrov. He can't see yet, but they say he'll be cured soon. He got hurt in an air raid, too.. He's our youngest because he can't do any of the things we can and then he's only unfortunate for the time being, not like we are."

"Well, it seems I must be the youngest of all, younger than Kovrov," Voropayev replied. "Because I have lost a leg—not a thing of great importance, of course, and only three ribs, and have a quite insignificant hole in my lungs and a few in my body—I call all that a trifle."

"And what is not a trifle?" Roly-Poly asked in a challenging tone, without raising his eyes to Voropayev's face.

"I wasn't joking when I said it was a trifle, you needn't bristle up at me like that. It's far harder for you than for me. But still, in my present position, things are no easier for me than for you."

Zina clapped her small round fingerless palms, and exclaimed:

"I like riddles of this kind."

With a fish-like movement of his body, Roly-Poly turned onto his side to hear and see better.

"How do you make that out?" he asked, wrinkling his brow.

"Because, my friend, I have a little boy and he's sickly, and I am not so strong that I can work for both."

He paused a moment, and the thin thread of logic that had guided him suddenly snapped.

"Yes, but you can walk and do as you like and I can't even put a piece of bread into my mouth," Naidyenov said in an unfriendly tone. "And look at all the fighting you've done!" he nodded towards the medal ribbons Voropayev was wearing. "And I. . . ."

"I was fighting for you, too, children."

"Were you on the western front?" the legless boy, Bunchikov asked anxiously. "I'm from the western."

"I've been on the western, too. So we're from the same place."

"If I hadn't been blown up, I'd have gone with my army group right to Berlin. General Slavin—do you know him?—he was like my own father to me, he didn't want to let me go, but of course, I understood myself that—what good was I?"

"That'll do," Zina stopped Bunchikov. "Let Comrade Voropayev tell us something about the war."

"Oh no, I'm not going to tell you anything about the war today; let's enjoy ourselves. Why don't you come out and have a look at the tree, eh?"

"They're shy," Maria Bogdanovna explained. "I've been trying my best to persuade them. . . ."

"Well, I'm surprised at you, children! What nonsense! You must be crazy! Do you mean to tell me that you are shy of your wounds? As if there weren't a lot of splendid people, working people, physically disabled? A great mathematician was blind from birth. An American woman was deaf, dumb and blind all her life. Then take Nikolai Ostrovsky. Was he in any better position than Roly-Poly? If I'm to go by you, then I should run away from people, eh? Is that your advice? No, I'm not going to run away. My leg wasn't cut off for stealing or being a bandit, I lost it honourably in battle—it's my highest military honour, children. There's no shame in my having one leg, and Bunchikov having lost both his, and Roly-Poly having neither legs nor arms. We are fighters, not crooks. Now, then—Opanas Ivanych!"

The old man strode into the room, and drew himself up at attention involuntarily, for Voropayev's call sounded like a command.

"Call someone in, will you?—and let's wheel out these beds! . . ."

Svetlana and Anya Stupina ran in.

"I'm leading the column. Roly-Poly follows next, then Zina, then Bunchikov. Svetlana Chirikova will come as secretary to Kovrov."

"I don't want to make a show of myself and be laughed at!" Naidyenov cried in alarm, but they could see it was the last outburst of his conquered shyness.

"Please announce, Maria Bogdanovna, that the war children are coming out—and everyone should stand up to greet them."

The whole affair began from the beginning. The big-hipped girl with the gilt moon in her hair re-arranged the procession. The beds of the little invalids were included in it. A minute or two later the children had got over their shyness and forgotten everything in the world but play.

Voropayev joined the group of grown-ups.

At this distance the maimed children looked still more pitiful and when Roly-Poly, trembling a little with excitement and propped up by pillows, recited Lermontov's poem "Mtsyri", and came to the lines:

Two dull existences like this
Would I exchange and count it bliss,
Could I have but the half of one,
Wherein I fought, afraid of none.

he declaimed them with such passion, that there was not a person present who did not feel the intense will to live that seemed to emanate from this small stubborn creature.

"He wants to be a scholar," the guests whispered, "Merezhkova is teaching him English. He says he's going to show the Germans what a Russian can do even when he has neither arms nor legs."

Tsimbal came up just then.

"The young people who are growing up in our midst!" he said in a hoarse undertone. "Regular little heroes. When I look at that little Roly-Poly, I feel a downright blackguard. Good God!" he made a despairing gesture and passed on.

Seeing that no one was paying any attention to him just then, Voropayev slipped out on the dark staircase and went down to the garden. No trace remained of the quiet spring-like night: the wind was tearing through the garden, groping and rustling in the shrubs, shifting the coarse sand on the paths, playing with the twigs, hissing and whistling in the tops of the pines. Somewhere in the distance a sea of woods boomed in the wild storm.

The turmoil in nature and the loosening of restraint had something in them akin to the feelings that overcame Voropayev at the moment.

Though it was pitch dark, he suddenly resolved to go home.

It was now close upon that strange hour in which so much belief is placed by the timid human heart, forever filled with hopes in the future; it was close upon the mysterious hour of the New Year. What was it bringing, what long-needed joy and happiness would it usher in? It was time, high time!

The night was dark to the point of dizziness. Air, sky, the woods, the road that wound and looped downwards to the sea, the red crags before the vineyards, the farm houses and finally the sea that never wholly disappeared from the picture, were now smudged out, merged in one—in the blinding, howling, windy gloom, that quaked horribly like a chasm.

He groped his way, his hands stretched out before him. Again and again he was prompted to turn back, and only self-respect kept him from retracing his steps. At last, casting shame to the winds, he got down and crawled like Cossack scouts. It amused him and he felt much more cheerful.

They would look round for him and find him gone—they would never believe he could get home by himself. Only Naidyenov might believe it and respect him for it. He could see that stubborn youngster in his mind's eye all the time.

The slow sliding on his hands soon fatigued him, however, to the point of sickness and when at last he reached the familiar path along the cliff, he was perspiring and breathless. He crawled to the edge and lay motionless, under the spell of the moment. All that he could sense as space was the murk and the hollow echo of the groaning, creaking trees, the swish of pebbles streaming down, the beat of the sea on the shore, the echo of a sound that struck fear into the listener. . . Nature consisted solely in sounds, almost tangible to him.

He lay on the brink of the aerial chasm like a bird with broken wings.

It is said that the body is naught, that the soul is all. This is certainly an exaggeration. But, on the other hand, surely it could not have been only the sound diaphragm and the healthy lungs that had made him the former Voropayev, whom he now envied because he would never again be that man? Had he given up thoughts of Goreva merely because he had to go about with an artificial limb and spit blood, and was, therefore, unfit for her?

And Naidyenov? The little boy without arms or legs, dreaming of his future, was so great that Voropayev, forgetting himself, could think only of the child.

The wind struck him in the back and filling his overcoat like a sail, sped him towards the brink. Had he but loosened his convulsive grip of the boulder, his body would have been hurled into the air like a stranded log on the beach, lifted and driven along by the fury of the torrent.

No! Never! It wasn't worth that!

Well, a Happy New Year to you, Serezhka!

And a Happy New Year to you, my dear Shura!

May you all be very happy!

With the memory of Shura came the memories of others who had been close to him, he smiled at them now from this distance. They had his best wishes for their success and happiness—every one whose soul had ever touched his!

He lay there, gazing into the fathomless chasm of the sea and talking to himself aloud:

"Dear friends, do you sometimes think of Alexei Voropayev, or, having dropped out of reports and the like, and being no longer mentioned on the pages of military publications, has he vanished forever from your too hurried memory like something destined never to cross your path again?"

Yet he did not think he had been forgotten, as he himself forgot no one, though occasionally he might be unable to recall a name or a face.

Nothing that had become a part of himself could be forgotten.

Some night we may all have the same dream and, awaking, think: how great, how strong and indivisible is this family—our own generation!

CHAPTER SIX

"Dear friend,

"How I miss you! How greatly all of us who know you so well feel the need of your uncompromising logic and your ability to give a general background to the smallest event. As you yourself understand very well, our brains are all a bit muddled.

"We are bursting into the heart of Europe with meteoric speed. Yesterday I was dressing the wound of a descendant of the Rumanian admiral, Murzesco, who accomplished the first and only naval exploit in the history of the Rumanian fleet, that very same Murzesco who took part — with our Shestakov and Dubassov—in the sinking of the Turkish monitor "Hadji-Rahman" in the Danube in 1878.

"Today I was talking to a Hungarian magnate whose family dates back to the 14th century. He invited me to his castle on the Danube and promised to show me a portrait of Paul I with the tsar's autograph addressed to the general's great grandfather; he was firmly convinced that this would make him popular with our high command.

"I have met many old social-democrats who knew Lenin, anarchists, Communists, Russian whiteguards, Georgian Mensheviks and Armenian Dashnaks but to my great surprise, I never meet any fascists. One might think they never existed.

"I stayed at the village dressmaker's house for a few days. She allowed me to use her cupboard. I found there, in one of the drawers, a pile of unfinished flags with the black swastika. They did not think it necessary to hide them. 'What's all this?' I asked the mistress of the house. She answered with a shrug:

"'Ah, goodness knows what it is! They ordered this rubbish—three or four hundred flags, and I didn't even bother to see what it was.'

"Europe reminds me of that dressmaker. Nobody seems to know anything about fascism. I saw one of the collaborators of Tiszo, the Slovak Quisling, and he spoke enthusiastically of the Slovak partisans and our Russian boys who fought side by side with the Slovak soldiers.

"'But you're a fascist, aren't you?' I asked him.

"He was highly offended at that.

"'I—a fascist? The Slovaks were simply pawns in Hitler's hands,' and so on and so forth, until I almost had to apologize to him.

"Impressions crowd in on one like waves in a storm.

"I received your brief New Year greeting after it had passed through at least thirty-five hands. To tell the truth it offended me, but I asked someone to tell you that I fainted from joy.

"For goodness' sake, write and tell me all about the way you're sowing, or manuring the ground, or something equally businesslike. I'm in a great hurry and so this is just a short note."

At the beginning of February Korytov called an urgent conference of the district Party workers.

Voropayev, long since returned from the collective farms and now busy preparing his lectures on the history of the Party, decided not to attend but to stay at home and have a talk with his partner-landlady Sophia Ivanovna.

Knowing Korytov's verbosity, he was sure that this meeting, like others, would be taken up by the expression of the chairman's thoughts on the state of affairs in the district. Someone would be sure to acknowledge that the conference had opened far broader horizons and equipped them with larger experience. The motions on this would be sent to the regional committee at the first opportunity.

Voropayev did not care for these conferences. This time he preferred to stay at home for the reason that his relations with Lena's mother had taken an unpleasantly sharp and quarrelsome turn. In everything the old woman did, he fancied an attempt to make him her son-in-law, while she, alarmed by her partner's difficult character and afraid that he might draw out of his bargain, went to incredible lengths to please him and improve their relations, and only made them worse. A frank discussion could no longer be postponed, so Voropayev was rather glad that on account of the conference Lena would be home late that day and he would have a chance to get down to brass tacks with the old woman.

They did not light the lamp but sat down by the blazing brick stove that Sophia Ivanovna herself had built. Its door was open, the firelight played and leapt on the dark walls. Tanechka, Lena's girl, climbed on Voropayev's knees—she was a nice plump little girl—and cuddled up snugly, with her back to the warmth.

"Well, now, let's see, Sophia Ivanovna, what complaints have you against me," he began with a sigh.

Sophia Ivanovna cleared her throat hoarsely and began to enumerate them. Her conclusions amounted to this: that building should be done, as she put it, in an all-round way, things should be brought in, not taken out of the house, so that the house might feed and not impoverish them. In order that this might be done she suggested leaving the repairs until the spring, as all intelligent people did, because when repairs to the big sanatoria were begun, then, in between whiles, Voropayev would be able to get the house repaired. The winter should be employed in building the pigsty and hen house, in collecting manure and ashes.

"What I think, Alexei Veniaminovich—is that the rooms are the least important. If you want to be smart, you ought to go in for trading. Well, what are you jumping on me for now?"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Sophia Ivanovna!"

"Shame, my dear, isn't a fir tree, it doesn't prick your eyes. I've done nothing else all my life but feel ashamed, and what have I got for it? Nothing, here I am dependent on my daughter, barefoot and naked."

So they got into their usual argument.

Voropayev tried to convince the old woman that when he had rented the house, he had done so for the sole purpose of having a home of his own and had never thought of using it as a source of profit.

But Sophia Ivanovna would not listen, she interrupted him repeatedly, urging to convince him, that she had made a bad bargain with him, that when they had taken the lot between them, she had counted on making a living out of the house, knowing that it was her only means of livelihood. Then she said, she had promised to undertake to look after Voropayev and his son, and she really wanted him to be properly fed and cared for, but she had not, nor did she expect to have, money to buy him eggs and butter in the market, and besides, he was not the only one on her hands, and who knew what might happen to her yet?

"No, all your attempts to turn into a trader, I warn you, are going to be nipped in the bud," he said at last, getting up cautiously and lifting the sleeping Tanya in his arms. "Nipped in the bud without mercy, bear that in mind!"

The old woman got up, too.

"So I can clear out then. Thank you, Alexei Veniaminovich, thank you, I'm sure. I looked after you as I would after my own flesh and blood and that's all the gratitude I get for it."

"Why, who said you had to clear out? Where'd you get that idea? You're just saying it to spite me now!" he cried, flaring up in good earnest.

Their argument developed into recriminations, threatening to end in a rupture. There is no doubt this would have happened if Lena had not run into the room, flushed and breathless. Though she behaved with her usual quiet restraint, both Voropayev and the old woman sensed that she had brought important news and stood silent, looking at her expectantly.

As her gaze imperceptibly flitted about the room and she saw her little girl in Voropayev's arms, Lena's brows drew together and she smiled—an expression that suited her—and she stood still by the door. The leaping flames from the open stove lit up her features, making them seem now radiant, now dark, as though she was nervously grimacing.

"Put on your coat, Alexei Veniaminovich, and come as quick as you can to the committee office," she commanded, without explaining. She took down his coat from the hook, as if there could be no question of his not agreeing, and added: "It's so slippery—it's terrible walking! . . Be sure and take your stick and your torch as well."

Sophia Ivanovna sighed and groaned in sympathy—there might never have been any quarrel between them.

"Where are you dragging him off to—this hour of the night?" she screamed at Lena. "Do you want to kill him? A poor sick man and here she's hurrying him off somewhere for a walk in this weather!"

She did not try to delay Voropayev, realizing, very likely, that he had no right to stay at home if they had sent for him so urgently from God knew where.

Voropayev looked Lena over; she was wearing the inevitable black stockings and felt slippers. Her legs were slim and strong like a girl's.

"Sophia Ivanovna, get her those boots of mine."

The old woman promptly got down on her knees and dragged from under the bed his best top boots, made for him while he still had the use of two feet, and long since destined to be sold at the Sunday bazaar.

A bewildered expression came into her face for an instant; the housekeeper struggled with the mother in her. She might have tried to persuade Voropayev to keep his new boots, if Lena had not said at that moment that she did not need them.

Nothing made the old woman so mad as for others to disagree with her.

"Put 'em on when you're told!" she shouted, waving the boots. "She'll always go plump against folks if she can!"

Lena's brows drew together, and she no longer smiled, as she said in a scarcely audible tone:

"All right, give me a pair of clean stockings."

Even in the middle of winter, her legs were sunburnt, and the frozen feet looked helpless and childish.

"Stuff some cotton wool inside them," her mother cried excitedly—she was pleased with the turn things had taken when she saw Lena trying on the boots. "Now, see you don't scuff the toes on the stones. Well, you ought to be warm. Go on, quick now, take him there, since the folks are asking for him."

The night was dark, with a raw, piercing wind. A sharp sleety snow was blowing from the mountains. The sidewalks with their frozen puddles were so slippery that the few passers-by kept to the middle of the road.

"You want to cripple me, Lenochka," Voropayev said, shaking his head. "How do you think I'll ever get there?"

She took his arm and repeated stubbornly:

"You must, Alexei Veniaminovich, you have to be there."

"And what's on the agenda?"

Lena stopped, and took his elbow trustfully in her firm, small hands, a thing she had never done before.

"It's going to be something very, very important, Alexei Veniaminovich."

She told him that she had just heard in the district Party office that American and British ships were expected, that many newcomers had appeared at the Party committee office, and Korytov had kept asking for Voropayev and was vexed to find that he had not come yet.

"You always stand up for Korytov, Lena. True to the last, eh?"

"I'm always good to good people," she replied vaguely, leading him steadily forward through the darkness.

They said no more until they reached the door of the committee office where men and women were talking in low voices; cigarette ends glowed in the darkness and there was a strong smell of shag tobacco.

When Voropayev entered the secretary's office, the conference was about to close. Korytov, glancing at his watch and then at Voropayev, shook his head in irritation. They were drawing up lists of those who were to be responsible for putting the different sections of the town in order and selecting interpreters from among the teachers.

"You must excuse us, Colonel," Korytov began in an unfriendly and rather haughty tone, "we've given you a special assignment without asking your leave. We want you to be an interpreter on special occasions for the city as a whole. You have to be here all the time, you see. And if for some reason or other you're not here on the spot, you should be where you can be easily found. Beginning from tomorrow morning."

The proposal to appoint Voropayev interpreter was welcomed by the Party workers of the district. Everyone tried to get hold of him and whisper: "I hear he's coming tomorrow, is that right?" or "Is it true that Korytov had a phone call from Molotov?"

A colonel noted down Voropayev's address—"Just in case!" he said mysteriously; a major from the State Security Department, whom he did not know asked him a few questions in English and moved off, apparently satisfied, then, after a few minutes, led him aside and explained that he did not think Voropayev would have anything very important to do.

"Except, perhaps, if the Americans and the British start a shindy between themselves—you might have to quiet them down and smooth things over," he added.

Paussov questioned him closely as to whether Americans ate pickled herring with onions and might one offer them tea or would it be considered not quite the thing.

It seemed to each person that he was bound to participate in the coming events and answer for them, and for this reason all were on the alert, excited and grave. Some wanted to place guards on the forest paths, though this had already been done without them, others decided to top the daily work quotas, or advised Lieutenant-Colonel Rybalchenko to assemble the fishermen and put out to sea.

Rybalchenko agreed that it was necessary to put out to sea. Not that there was likely to be any sort of a catch, as a storm had been raging at sea for three days now, but he swore he would go out at daybreak.

Stoiko, chairman of the *Novosel* collective farm, was no doubt convinced that today or tomorrow Stalin himself would come on a visit to his farm and so he demanded that the order of the welcome should be drawn up for him.

There was something wonderfully fine in the general agitation. People grew more mature from mere proximity to a great event, that actually did not concern them personally. Yet it would not be right to say it did not concern them. They themselves were the reason of this great event. World famous men were coming to confer and decide the outcome of the war won by those very people who, nervous and excited, thronged the rooms and passages of the Party committee.

Once again Voropayev had plenty of time to think.

He sat for hours now on the balcony of the committee office. Four times a day Lena silently placed before him a glass of tea, or milk or some compote of stewed dried fruits. Three sacks of dried apples and pears had been brought from some collective farm, and everyone in the committee drank this stewed fruit juice from morning till night.

At the beginning there was not much for Voropayev to do. Then several foreign vessels put into port and lively parties of American and British seamen, followed by a train of curious and admiring little boys, appeared on the embankment. The guests were gay. The very land of this fantastic country inclined them to sentimentality. They were glad to have photos taken together with the local people, especially with the

feminine section of the population, the more attractive members of which evoked their applause.

The embankment was soon thronged with people. Some of the guests who came ashore to see the sights took great fancy to the only restaurant which was in a shop that had been a barber's. Russian cocktails, a mixture of beer and vodka were pronounced a knockout by some who had never been knocked out in their lives.

The need for special interpreters did not arise, however, until a few skirmishes had taken place between British and Americans for the division of military glory.

Hardly had Voropayev made peace in one group of seamen and sworn to return and join them in drinking a large flask of whiskey, when he had to hobble off to another, where a conversation was taking place on the risky subject of Dunkirk, the honour of the flag and the fact that the British did most of their fighting with their tongues.

He was struck by the frailness of the friendly relations between the seamen of two allied and kindred powers, and, furthermore, the ease with which each side sought a pretext for a quarrel. It might seem to an onlooker that the state of friendly alliance oppressed and almost insulted both the one and the other and that it was natural to them to feel themselves in opposite camps.

The British, even on the slight acquaintance he had with them in the street, impressed Voropayev as people who noticed with sincere surprise that the world around them was inhabited by others beside themselves and that these others were also human.

Ready as h was to believe that Russians were bave, Norwegians pious, Spaniards hot-tempered and Belgians possesed of good judgement, the Englishman envied none, regarding himself as above them all. The Americans gave the impression of being very good-natured lads, who detested only two nations in the world—the Japanese and the British.

Voropayev was unexpectedly relieved of his onerous duties of keeping the peace. It had become known for certain that Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill had arrived. A tale was going about of a little boy to whom the British premier had given a cigar. An old seaman had sworn that Churchill was a professional boxer and had given up the ring just before the war. Several women appeared who claimed to have been spoken to or greeted by Roosevelt. Every handsome foreigner was suspected of being Anthony Eden.

Roosevelt was much discussed among the people. He left a favourable impression on all who saw him.

They like to sense an indomitable spirit in famous men, for what, indeed, is the measure of greatness but this?

Churchill with his invariable cigar, his chunky figure that gave him the appearance of advanced age, his youthful liveliness and surprising endurance, made a memorable impression, too, but not of the same nature as that made by Roosevelt. The British Prime Minister evoked amazement rather than liking. One sensed in him the indefatigable business man, obsessed with anxiety to be in time for the most important thing that might happen any minute now. His manner of looking into people's faces as though they were about to speak to him always evoked laughter, and his preference for "jeeps", in which he could see and be seen, bowing with a pleased expression, also gave rise to discussions and stories.

He was the head of the Allied Army, and this alone made people want to respect him, but they could find nothing in him that might carry one away. The street saw in him an elderly gentleman who had just finished an appetizing lunch and drunk something particularly nice that had perked him up considerably.

One evening Voropayev received a phone call, asking him to come at once to the *First of May* collective farm, where a tipsy American was going from house to house, putting the people through an incredibly idiotic questioning. A car was sent round at once. The desire to see his friends at the farm was so strong that he left without dropping in at the district committee office.

The American had been knocking about the collective farm since early morning and, by the time Voropayev arrived, had reached the almost subhuman state of the old soak on a spree. Voropayev was sure that this must be some small fry and could hardly believe

his eyes when presented with a visiting card that bore the name of a well-known journalist on one of the most famous papers in the world.

Considering that in his present condition the guest, who had his own interpreter—a tsarist ex-officer—with him, could not be left to go about alone, Voropayev gave orders for them both to be put up for the night at Ogarnova's while he himself went to the Podnebeskos.

Natasha was at home. Her full figure had indescribable charm, though she thought she was disfigured and looked awful, and she blushed as she came forward to shake hands with him. But everything about her, her smile, the big ponderous belly, the pallor of her face that showed her weariness, seemed so touching that Voropayev looked at her fondly, almost tenderly.

They were talking of Yuri, who had gone away to consult a noted specialist about his health, and of the way things were turning out favourably for the family, when Stepka Ogarnov ran in to say that the American had awakened and was drinking Riesling to sober down. They could not waken his interpreter, though they had tried to make him drink in his sleep.

Voropayev got up and "put his best crutch forward."

When he got to the Ogarnovs', Harris—that was the American's name—proved to be a lively fellow, well disposed towards the Soviet system. The two men took a liking to each other and fell into conversation.

About an hour later they were arguing about the impending peace as though they were old acquaintances. Their sharp language and differences of opinion could not dampen their ardour. On their return late that evening to the district centre, they agreed to meet next day to finish their conversation, but, as so often happens, did not talk the whole thing out on this occasion, either, and so fixed up to meet for the third time.

It all began with the American's decision to get to the bottom of the Soviet system and Soviet people. They talked of national characters and national destinies and finally argued about democracy.

"God forbid that you should regard yourselves as a democracy," Harris said lightly.

"Why?"

"We hold the monopoly on the finest democracy in the world. There isn't, there couldn't be any democracy better than the American. I mean it—seriously."

"Is that your personal conviction or your newspaper's?"

"Mine, of course. I'm interested—for no mercenary motives—in convincing our readers that you are almost Americans, but I feel that this is beyond me."

"But it wouldn't be true—surely you understand that yourself?"

"Perhaps it wouldn't. But we are studying the world by making comparisons. We Americans are, of course, a hundred per cent democracy. We like and respect all that resembles us or approaches us in any way, and reject all that differs from us. This is a point you mustn't forget if you want us to like you."

"Then what makes your people so hostile to the British? It seems to me that there's no other people who are so keen to be like you, and yet. . . ."

"As far as traditional England is concerned, there's nothing more unprincipled in the world. We Americans haven't overmuch respect for her, and sometimes this feeling embraces involuntarily the whole of the people."

"Supposing that is the explanation. But in that case, what have you in common with the Chinese? If we are talking of what is called the soul of a nation, you and the Chinese are souls of different colour and different dimensions."

The American burst out laughing.

"You think we can't get on without the laws of capitalist development, the competition for markets and so forth?"

"Yes, that's what I think."

"You see, I'm no good at fencing when I'm sober. Take me somewhere for a quiet drink. I'd love to pass an hour or two without that interpreter of mine."

Voropayev resolved to take the journalist to see Shirokogorov.

As he anticipated, the old man was far from pleased to see the foreigner. Still everything passed off very well.

Shirokogorov could speak French, which was almost as familiar as English to Harris, and Voropayev joined in the conversation in Russian or English.

The talk turned on wine. Shirokogorov remarked with distress in his tone that this year's wine, the victory vintage, would not be a very good one for several reasons.

"So you count on victory this year?" Harris pounced on the old man's words. "Tell me frankly—do you?"

Shirokogorov replied in the affirmative and was not particularly perturbed when he saw the American jotting something down.

"Yes, we may win this year if you, gentlemen, do not hinder us," he repeated with a bitter little smile.

"We?" Harris pricked up his ears, glanced at Shirokogorov's face, and continued writing.

"You and the British."

"Well, isn't that just wonderful. Why do you think so?"

"You're never quite ready. There's always something. I think you're still going through the defeat stage and you aren't ready for victory yet."

"Oh, that's wonderful! And don't you think a great deal remains for you to do as well?"

The old man blanched, and spoke as though from a platform.

"Less than has been done already. We've brought the victory so close to you that it's within reach. But you're afraid it'll be said that it was a gift from us."

"And what do you think?"

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"You want my private opinion?"

"Just your private opinion."

"Well, I, Shirokogorov, consider that the British are undoubtedly getting it as a present from us, but you have done more on your sector than all of them, though far less than we have, and the victory could never have been won without us, even if you'd seriously wanted to win it. That's all. You may write it all down if you wish. Of course, it's only my private opinion."

At this point Voropayev, noticing that the old man's nostrils were dilating, strove to turn the conversation into the safer channels of vintnery.

Reluctantly, Shirokogorov led his guests into the room, furnished with tables and seats shaped like wine barrels. Svetlana Chirikova, whom Voropayev was surprised to see working for the old man, set down some glasses with narrow tops and wide bottoms much like lamp chimneys. They were specially made for wine tasting and inconvenient for draining quickly.

"Let's start with the dry."

Shirokogorov's voice sounded solemn.

Svetlana filled the glasses with greenish-golden wine. The old man raised it to his nostrils, and smelt it several times, frowning, then throwing back his head as though he was inhaling ammonia.

"Grapes of this kind have not always been used to advantage here," he said sadly, forgetting everything else. "Riesling is a typical German wine and is only good on the Rhine, but it seems to me that our Riesling from Alcadar is inimitable for delicacy of flavour. What do you say?"

Harris finished his wine, tipping his head back like a rooster because the glass was designed for slow sipping. Wine tasters do not drink, they savour the wine.

"It has a touch of the morning, with its colours toned down," Shirokogorov said admiringly, twirling the glass.

"Pour me out another glass, miss," Harris asked boldly. "I didn't quite catch the toned-down colours in the first—I'm not experienced in these things."

When they tried the Aligoté, Harris decided to keep abreast of things and so he mentioned the greenish hue, a remark that was quite out of place, as this particular wine had no such hue.

The old man frowned and hurried the process of tasting.

"Here's a fine red dinner wine. It's made from several varieties of grapes—the Cabernet, Malbek, Grenach and Murved. A sound, businesslike kind of wine, without any particular delicacy."

On hearing the word "sound", Harris brightened visibly and again gulped it down before he remembered to smell and look at it.

"Hm-m . . . it certainly is," he said in a rather embarrassed tone, sniffing at the empty glass. "It makes itself felt, I should say."

"Yes, it makes itself felt very quickly and even rather roughly," Shirokogorov remarked.

"Roughly?" Harris was almost offended that wine should be spoken of irreverently. "I wouldn't say that. Well, perhaps if you were to drink a whole bottle, but so far I wouldn't say it's been rough going."

He was obviously longing for another glass of this ordinary "sound" wine, but Shirokogorov had already passed on to the madeira.

"Here's a vivid wine, wonderful stuff! I should explain that we specialize in strong and dessert wines. The dry climate and the steady high temperatures give us a sweet, aromatic grape with rich possibilities. To put it picturesquely, our grapes love to be converted into good wines. . . Look at that amber gold. It is like old amber, isn't it? This is from the Portuguese varieties Cerciale and Verdelio, with a touch of Malvoisie and Albilio. And what a delicate, beautifully blended bouquet, what harmonious colour! This is a vivid, gifted brilliant wine. And the pleasant thing about it," he addressed Voropayev, "is that it gets better year by year. Did you ever try, Alexei Veniaminovich, a red port of Cabernet grapes? In its native land it yields the best Burgundy, while we here make a port wine of it that is in no way inferior to the best Portuguese kinds. I would call it a pomegranate port. It's like a molten gem. And the taste! It is rich and strong, of the most delicate aroma."

Harris, who was jotting something down, nodded.

"This is our Pinot-Gris. The French, as you probably know, obtain from it, in combination with other Pinot, a champagne or a lighter table wine. But our champagne specialists, for some reason or other, do not particularly care for it, and so we decided to make a dessert wine of it. Challenging the French on their own ground, so to speak. It turned out well. What we got, as you may see for yourselves just now, is splendid and original, a noble wine, wine, the colour of strong tea, thick, strong and rich."

"It's a beautiful wine," Harris said approvingly. "An excellent wine."

"And the aroma? Reminds you of a crust of rye bread, a strong scent that lingers in the memory a long time."

"You don't think, Professor, that wine should smell of wine and not of something else? For my part, I don't understand why wine should smell of bread."

"And what is the smell of wine?" Shirokogorov answered with another question, but, seeing that Harris was disinclined to continue the argument, motioned to Svetlana to clear away the glasses. "Now we'll try our muscatel from native grapes—our foremost wine."

Svetlana brought a tray with four glasses that glinted with gold, and Shirokogorov was the first to take his and carefully lift it to his face as though it were a flower.

"Now I'll ask you—don't you catch the honeyed breath of the meadows in this? Or can't you smell anything?"

"I don't know," Harris confessed, rather embarrassed. "At any rate, doctor, nothing that reminds me of meadows."

"In that case, just gulp it down so as to empty the glass. What you should drink, my dear chap, is boot polish dissolved in spirits." Shirokogorov added for a joke.

Harris laughed. "I prefer my spirits neat. And I can imagine the meadows without it, Professor. What do I want with the scent of a meadow while I'm drinking wine? It's an original idea, of course. Typically Russian."

"There is a word in our dictionary: inspiration. The wine I make exists to inspire people. It has the fragrance of associations, of life itself. The wine that you toss off at a gulp, let me tell you, is usually sipped. It makes its way to your marrow like a remembrance of past pilgrimages and journeys, golden pastures high in rocky mountains, and makes you feel young when you are old. Your breast breathes in that vast space, your gaze is riveted on the far distances, all that was hard seems easy, all that was dark seems clear, all that was distant—within the reach. To my mind this wine, speaking poetically, has the soul of a mountain shepherd. The mountain slopes are covered with vineyards, below—lies the sea. In the still heat of day the shepherd stands leaning on his crook, looking into space and humming a martial song of his forefathers. Forgive me for this lyrical digression, it's very much out of place, I feel. . . Let's get on with the business. . . This is another kind of white muscatel. A neighbour of the first. They're only divided by a matter of twenty kilometres along

the coast, but smell it—this second muscatel has a delicate smell of citron. Where could it have come from? It's hard to say. We have no citron trees about here, and our wines are not mixed with anything alien. It is doubtful if we shall ever know the origin of this smell. You sometimes catch it on ocean-going steamers. It is the smell of travel and discovery. This second muscatel seems to me to have the soul of a sailor, who has crossed all oceans, survived all storms, and now in his declining years tranquilly recounts his travels, while he sits at the threshold of his house. Well, to pass on... This a rose muscatel, differing from the two first in the curious and so far inexplicable feature that it has the scent of the rose, but—mark this—not every season. The scent of roses haunts it only in special years. It's a very beautiful, and I would say, feminine wine. You've heard the old tale of the nightingale in love with the rose? Were I a poet or a storyteller, I would make up a tale about a vine in love with a rose."

"Well, this is marvellous," Harris remarked. "Sentimental, quite in American style. But listen, Professor, how can you bother your head over all these beautiful trifles when your country is devastated?" he asked, slipping his notebook into his pocket.

"I am preparing the elixir of triumph for her, my dear chap, the wine of victory, the wine of rest and comfort. One cannot live in today alone, because today is, more often than not, an unfinished yesterday. The real present is always ahead of us."

Without waiting for an invitation, Harris filled his glass with muscatel and added madeira.

Shirokogorov shook his head disapprovingly.

"I never can understand why people drink cocktails. Such unappetizing stuff could only be drunk...."

"... by British and Americans. I know. Who is ahead of everyone else? The Russians. Who eats best? The Russians. Who drinks the best stuff? The Russians. You know, I've heard all this time and again and I know just what these opinions are worth."

"Well, you see, Mr. Harris, the point isn't whether we eat better than anyone else, perhaps we have worse food than you, but we have long deserved a better life for a great deal that we've done. You aren't writing this down, I see? That's a pity."

"The soul of your local wines is by no means as fiery as your own, Professor."

"That's a pity, too. We'll need fiery qualities yet."

"What for? You're going to end the war this year, fascism will be done away with then, so far as I understand...."

"German fascism, yes. But you, Mr. Harris, are going to take the place of those who have been overthrown, and you are going to become the most violent defender of capitalism in its worst forms. And there are plenty like you."

"But why should I be the one?" Harris took out his notebook again. "This is extraordinary. And you think that Roosevelt is likely to become the defender of fascism, too, some day?"

"Why? He might take our side."

"Is that so? But why—this is my last question—why do you foresee this in regard to America? Doesn't fascism suit England better?"

"Churchill's England is your mistress, a lady of a respectable age who has suddenly decided to throw in her lot with a young man, promising to leave him a nice little legacy if he will only love her while she lives."

"Well, that's all! I'll earn more out of this day with you than I've earned for a long time, Professor. Goodbye and thanks a lot," and Harris gave a harsh laugh.

"Just imagine!—saying that England is our mistress," he growled, as he got into the car. "You heard him, of course?"

"The old man is perfectly right and there is really no point in talking about it. You'll admit, there are two Englands, and one of them is kept by you."

"We're not so rich that we can afford to keep England."

"And England is not so rich, you'll admit, as to yield to you for nothing."

Voropayev told the driver to go up the hill to the children's sanatorium.

The children were having dinner when the visitors arrived.

Voropayev led his guest to the "philosophers' room." The children were all there, with the exception of Zina, who came running in when she heard that the American had come, ready, as always, to talk about her comrades and herself.

Shura Naidyenov kept his eyes on

his book, turning the leaves with a stick held in his mouth, and fitted with a rough rubber tip.

"This is inhuman," Harris whispered, sure that English could not possibly be understood by any in that room."

"What's inhuman?"

"It's inhuman to make this unfortunate little creature go on living. You understand what I'm trying to say?"

"You mean, because you have two arms and two legs, Mr. Harris, you are far happier than he is? And that therefore it is more human to give you the chance to live? Is that it?"

"Yes. That's about it."

"I don't agree with you."

But Harris would not let it go at that.

"Just tell me what kind of an experiment this child is being kept for?" he asked Voropayev. "I suppose you're sure he'll grow up a genius?"

"He may, of course, but I don't insist he will."

"Then, in that case, what sort of a creature do you reckon to rear?"

"A man. Why don't you ask the boy himself, by the way? He can speak a little English."

Without another glance at Naidyenov, who did not raise his eyes from his book, Harris turned and went out of the room. He did not wait to say goodbye to anyone, but got into the car.

They went back by the lower road along the seashore.

"Didn't he like it up there?" the driver asked Voropayev.

"No, he didn't."

"I see, he sampled a different wine there."

The road wound among the vineyards, mournful and lonely at this time of the year. The bare vines lay in twisted grey snarls over the hillside. The little huts where the women sat to keep watch in the autumn were deserted, and in general there was not a living soul in sight—they might have been going through a deserted country.

The driver pulled up suddenly by a roadside well, and, turning to Voropayev, said:

"Will you tell him, Comrade Colonel, that the Germans threw my brother-in-law's two little children into this well alive."

Voropayev translated. Harris said nothing.

"When I got back from the partisans, I went down the well and found them and identified them. That was a ghastly business. Makes my blood run cold to remember it. The younger, a boy of seven, had his legs and a rib broken—must have starved there, but the elder—he was thirteen—he'd fallen on his head, evidently. . . ."

The American's lips blenched.

"Some things shouldn't be talked of . . . aloud," he said.

"Then we'd have to keep silent far too often."

They did not talk any more until they reached the town.

The next conversation between Voropayev and Harris took place on the esplanade.

On that occasion Harris insisted that Russians did not care for Americans. Voropayev explained to him that it was not a question of caring for anyone, and that in general Americans were well liked here.

"But you won't deny that many people in your country want to grab the fruits of victory for themselves?" Voropayev said.

"No. That's not true. . . No, you're wrong there."

"Well, I'm telling you that your bankers are aiming at only one thing—to turn America into a stronghold of militarism, while Churchill will thank heaven that he made such sound militarists out of them in good time. Churchill is their God—not Roosevelt. Roosevelt is too good for them. They've long deserved a worse president, Mr. Harris."

"May I write to you sometime, Voropayev?" the American asked unexpectedly.

"Why trouble? If you change your opinions, I'll hear of it without your letters, and if you stand where you are now, what sense would there be in writing?"

"Well, perhaps you're right."

So they parted, though they still had a great deal to say to each other.

Yet they were to meet once more. The foreign correspondents wanted to go and see Sevastopol, and once more Voropayev was needed.

At daybreak he caught the bus with the foreign correspondents. It was an unusually fine day. The foothills descending steeply to the sea, sparkled with

heavy dew that trickled over the face of the rock as though it were rain, oozing stealthily along the ground instead of falling from overhead. The delicate and mournful fragrance of winter, the smell of pebbles on the seashore and damp but not yet rotting leaves—an appetizing smell like leavened dough—pervaded the air without mingling with the smell of the sea. At midday the baked stones and clay walls of the houses smelled of hot bread, too.

The bus drove past a lonely grave at the roadside with the remains of a British tank close by. Those damned tanks burned up as easily as a candle. This must have belonged to Chernyak's brigade. It had passed by here. The men were Siberians, they were seeing spring on the Black Sea coast for the first time in its most wonderful and joyous month—May. It was at its very beginning, when the trees blossomed before they had grown green. The long branches of the Judas tree were thickly covered with small flowers and thrust themselves out like giant mauve corals. The peach and almond trees glowed, tinged with a lambent rosy light. Red and pink, and more rarely, blue, showed the fissures and crevices in the rocks, filled with narrow tendrils of flowering plants. Tanks lumbered past, camouflaged with blossoming plum and almond branches and resembling bits of orchards with bunches of mountain tulips stuck into the slits. They had not far to go for flowers when they were burying their dead comrades. Many died with flowers in their hands.

"Looks like the Riviera," said Ralph, the correspondent of a London paper. "Or perhaps Italy," as though he had not heard a word of what Voropayev had been saying about the tankmen.

"Was there fighting on the Riviera?" Voropayev asked, but received no answer because of the hooting of the siren as the car was making one of the worst hairpin bends of the pass.

When the sea remained behind and the mountains as if lying on their sides asleep came into view—a mournful and monotonous landscape—a Frenchman who had been dozing until now, woke up and asked:

"Has Stalin been to Sevastopol already? They say Churchill and Roosevelt went there today."

"I don't know," Voropayev replied, "Personally I wouldn't let anybody go there yet."

The Englishman rounded out the statement courteously:

"I can understand that. Historic memorials invariably call for a little touching-up, a certain amount of arrangement."

"This isn't Dunkirk," Voropayev objected. "I wouldn't have let even you go to Sevastopol. Must be many mines there yet."

"We're going wherever we want to go, Colonel, and only there. And by the way, I move we make a halt and have breakfast."

They were all in favour of this. Sevastopol was of no more interest to them than last year's snow.

As they were finishing breakfast, Harris said:

"Our esteemed but severe colonel would be very surprised, I'm sure, to learn that it was the Russian question that made me as a journalist."

Voropayev was sitting sideways to the speaker. Through this spot, where the foreigners were finishing their brandy, Provalov's division had passed only last year. Recollections crowded in on him. . . .

Meanwhile Harris told them that when he had been in Paris in 1909 as a young tourist, the Russian season was just opening at the Theatre Châtelet. This was a good opportunity of getting acquainted with a people of whom he knew nothing. He went to hear *Prince Igor*, heard Chaliapin sing, saw Nijinsky and Karsavina dance, and Fokin's Polovtsi dances.

"You understand what happened? *Prince Igor* is an opera that's somewhat heavy, like everything Russian, but melodious. And of course, Chaliapin was a splendid singer. And, of course, Nijinsky was the king of dancers. But their success was not won by singers, or solo dancers, but by the mass dances. They opened the eyes to the Russian soul. Passion, fury, self-abandonment! . . I purposely used the word self-abandonment, because it expresses a state of mind peculiar to the Russians. Forgetfulness of one's self and one's needs."

Harris glanced round at Voropayev and said:

"I am not mistaken in my interpretation of the word 'self-abandonment', Colonel?"

"To tell the truth, I couldn't really say. I'm not a philologist."

"Oh, well, I've scored one point there anyhow. I fancied you knew everything. But to go back to my story: if that show could have been filmed we Americans would have known the Russians ten years earlier. I went crazy over it then. There was the Horde of the Polovtsi, like dancing flames, rushing in, cracking their whips, flourishing their curved sabres, and howling, groaning, calling, the tempo becoming faster and more menacing every moment. I can tell you, sitting in the first row of the stalls during this scene made you feel nervous. I told myself then: Russian art puts an immense restraint on the passions of its people and keeps them from making a leap towards some far-off goal. What colours, what rhythms, what an impulse to escape somewhere into the fourth dimension!

"God forbid!—I thought at the time—that this self-abandoned passion should ever burst beyond the bounds of art. And my first correspondence job was on the subject of Russian ballet."

"Bravo!" said the tactful Frenchman, making a move to rise.

"We've still some time to spare," the Englishman said, "Harris is at liberty to talk until we finish his brandy."

"Yes, ballet is ballet, but that time even the cunning Briand who was applauding the Russian ballet dancers could not have foreseen the overwhelming tempos of the Russian leap into the unknown. You know, I'm sorry sometimes, Colonel, that Russia went wholly into politics."

"Ballet, like every other art, expresses the soul of the people, of course, but to study a country by its ballet is about on a par with studying fruit growing from jars of jam," Voropayev said. He did not want to take Harris seriously and get into an argument with him. He felt that he could not change the man's convictions. "You could have learnt much more about Russia at home if you had read Tolstoy, Chekhov and Gorky, not to mention Lenin," he added, controlling his rising irritation.

When Voropayev had finished speaking, Harris continued his story of what the celebrated Maurice Denis has said to him about the settings and costumes designed by Leon Bakst and Benois. Voropayev glanced at his watch. This was about the hour of the day when a division of the Maritime Army had burst into Balaclava last year and seen on the horizon the monument erected to the Italians who fell in 1855. From here the ascent began of Sapun Hill, the Golgotha of Sevastopol.

If the scene that had been witnessed here came alive for an instant, if but the sounds, the din of battle, could be heard, the American's tongue would cleave to the roof of his mouth and his heart, rotten with alcohol and scepticism, would stand still forever at the reverberation of what he called "self abandonment," the elemental thunder of Russian battle.

The men of the division had crawled shoulder to shoulder like locusts... The command posts had hardly time to follow, for the troops were moving so quickly; there seemed to be no need for command posts, because it is simple enough to command a battle that any soldier understands.

This was a soldier's battle, a people's battle, the onset and issue of which every man knew beforehand. One thing alone was not quite certain and that was whether it would last a day, a week or a month. But no matter how long it was to last, there could be only one result—the liberation of Sevastopol.

White limestone dust filled the air over the valley and the slopes of Sapun Hill, and a thick hail of stone poured down. Voropayev recalled seeing a dozen infantrymen and artillerymen harness themselves to a gun and tow it at a run up the steep slope. They wore no tunics, the sweat streamed down their faces, they ran, harnessed to a gun, shouting something at the top of their voices. The gun was dragged up fairly quickly, and whenever any of the "towmen" fell, someone else took his place at once. Soldiers, carrying shells in their arms like babies, ran after the gun and if any man of them fell it meant a double loss—of man and shell.

"What are you yelling for, boys?" Voropayev asked, pitying the gasping, breathless soldiers.

"This is Shouting Hill today, Comrade Colonel," a youthful artilleryman replied, "and from the German side, it's Sapun Hill, [1] or it might be called Groaning

[1] The name Sapun has a sound association with the Russian verb *sopet*—which means to wheeze.

Hill, but by evening we'll make it Death-Rattle Hill for them!"

It needed nine hours of unintermittent storming to make the German feel that this was their Death-Rattle Hill. Then it was that self-abandonment was witnessed on its true scale.

Meanwhile Harris was saying:

"Maurice Denis told me he was bringing his sketch book to the show. 'It's the most magical mirage that an artist ever saw,' he said."

"Yes, they were fond of brilliant colour in those days," the Frenchman agreed—he was wondering how soon they could start, because the brandy was finished.

At last, Harris allowed the Frenchman to get up, and got up himself.

"It's strange that you should see the Russian soul imaged in . . . the ballet," Voropayev said with a touch of derision. "That's all you know about it, I suppose. It seems to me that the storming of Sapun Hill—we'll be coming to the place presently—would reveal the soul of our people far more deeply to you. Or Stalingrad, for example. You don't agree?"

Harris shrugged his shoulders.

The Englishman glanced into a little guidebook and asked:

"What did you call it? Sapun Hill?"

"Yes, Sapun Hill."

"I think it would be worth while to have a look at the cemetery where the Allied soldiers were buried in 1855."

The very courteous Frenchman, who was greatly put out by the fencing match between Harris and Voropayev and evidently considered it his duty to smooth things over, said:

"I would formulate our job, gentlemen, as memorials! We're going to look at memorials only—there'll be some system in this. Otherwise, if we plunge into an analysis of events that took place here. . . What do you think?"

"You're quite right," the Englishman agreed. "There is at least some system in looking at memorials."

"But are there any memorials in the town?" Harris demanded.

"No, not yet, but the whole town is a memorial."

"Just listen to him," Harris retorted, livening up, "that's a purely Bolshevik way of putting things. There are no memorials yet—not a sign of one—but he turns the thing right over, so to speak, and declares that the whole town should be regarded as one great memorial. Oh, these people and their dialectics! Anyway, I'm with the majority."

The bus turned in the direction of the old English cemetery of 1855.

PART II

CHAPTER SEVEN

As usually happens after a storm, the day was very still, with a delicate scarcely awakened light that softened the contours of the rocks and gave a clear, distant perspective.

Voropayev was standing on Grafsky Quay, in the midst of a bunch of tipsy American sailors who scrutinized him as though he were one of the sights. They fingered his medals, and, tapping him on the chest just as they might have tapped at the window of an enquiry office, asked him whether he had been at Stalingrad, Sevastopol, Kiev, Rumania, Hungary, Vienna, or Leningrad. They were also curious to know whether he was a Ukrainian or an Uzbek, and if a Russian—was it by blood or only in name, and if he possessed any property, and what sort of a family he came from.

Voropayev had been photographed alone and among American seamen, and had given his new pals all he possessed—a duralumin cigarette case made for him by a Black Sea amateur craftsman, a cigarette lighter made of a cartridge, and a penknife with a coloured plastic handle. In return he had been presented with half a dozen fountain pens, a torn paper dollar with someone's autograph, a fascinating pencil with a miniature lamp inside the mica case, and about fifteen snapshots inscribed with invitations to America.

An open car glided very slowly past. The Soviet officers in it stared at Voropayev with curiosity.

"Is that Stalin?" several voices asked him.

"Oh, no," he replied.

A very familiar figure in a general's overcoat and tall sheepskin cap stood

up. Yes, he surely knew the lieutenant-general who alighted from the car and came towards Voropayev, spreading his arms in a gesture of astonishment.

"Don't you know me? I can see Voropayev as lost as a dog at a fair and I've come to rescue him. . . ."

"Roman Ilyich! . . What's brought you to these parts?"

"Glad to see you, very glad to see you again, Alexei Veniaminovich."

They embraced each other warmly.

"Say goodbye to the Allies for the time being and get into my car."

The Americans saluted and made way. General Romanenko took Voropayev's arm, looked him up and down, and evidently dissatisfied with what he saw, led him towards the car.

"No good, no good at all. . ." he said as they moved off. "Did you desert or what?"

They fell into talk as easily as though they had never been parted.

"Show me around town, Roman Ilyich, if it's not too much trouble."

"All right, let's go. Remembering old times?. . ."

"That's it. . . ."

"Well, you can look around while you're telling me about yourself. But how is it that you're still only a colonel?" he continued. "I was always looking out for your name in the orders of the Supreme Commander. You wouldn't be anything less than a colonel-general, I thought. And what the devil took you to the provinces? What about the academy? And then—you wanted to go in for writing at one time, didn't you? Or did all your good intentions come to nothing, eh?"

Romanenko had taught tactics at one time and got a staff job at once when he went to the front. He was lucky. He was within the range of vision of able field commanders, attracted their notice, and was rapidly promoted. He was chief of staff of an army when he was recalled to Moscow by the General Staff, and given a new and interesting job with splendid prospects. He hinted tactfully that he would be glad to have Voropayev there working with him. They had both been lieutenant-colonels when the war broke out. But though the hint was given with the utmost tact, Voropayev felt hurt and offended by it. He was suddenly aware of the shabbiness of his own overcoat beside Romanenko's, of the fact that his one boot looked old and worn, and that his artificial limb, given him by the collective farm, was clumsy.

"I've done with the academy. As to the writing I can do it here if I want to. Why did I give it up? All because of my health, Roman Ilyich. Besides, I've always felt I'd like to get close to the land, you know. I don't know the first thing about collective farm life. . . ."

And he told his old comrade of his misadventures. Romanenko laughed aloud as he waved his hands deprecatingly.

They drove slowly past the ruins of houses with bits of the sky peeping through, and along lonely and uninhabited streets. Neither music nor children's laughter was to be heard in them; no dog barked, no cyclist jangled his bell, the few passers-by hurried along dead streets, where only the dreary clatter of broken sheet-iron roofs and the persistent creak of a damaged but still tenacious pipe or signboard broke the silence. The harbour was enlivened only by Soviet and Allied warships.

Things were busier in Lenin Street, nearer to the Grafsky Quay, and from the beach at South Bay the sound of hammers and electric drills, drumming away like machine guns, never ceased for a moment.

"The men of the Second Guards Army broke in, I remember, from there, from the north side, and pushed their way up here to Grafsky Quay. They crossed in empty barrels and coffins from some German undertakers. There were whole flotillas of these coffins riding the waves afterwards, just by the beach to the astonishment of the local people."

"Were you with the Second Guards?"

"No, with the Maritime Army between Sapun Hill and the sea."

"And who was between you, I forgot?"

"General Kreitzer with the Fifty-First."

"That's right. Now I remember. I just missed being sent to him right before the storming. Shall we go on?"

At the turning to the right of Laboratory Gully, the first tank that had burst into the town stood on a pedestal, high on a mound. Voropayev recalled its crew as he had seen the men last. The field dressing station had been on that spot. Skripkin had died there. A bit further on Elansky had been blown to pieces.

It was depressing to see the battlefield bare, deserted and mute.

"Come along up to my place for a bit of dinner," Romanenko said as they were skirting the boundary of the town. At first Voropayev declined, excusing himself on the grounds of tiredness, but in the end he had to yield. He was overcome with a boyish shyness when he saw that the car was climbing the hill to the palace where the Soviet delegation was housed.

Romanenko calmly deliberated on Voropayev's future and insisted that he ought to return to the army, where he had something still to get and something still to give, and that all these doings in the collective farms were not actually so necessary to a man of his calibre.

"Say what you like, but I'm going to mention you to Vassili Vassilievich," he said collaring Voropayev and shaking him with his strong hands. "You remember him on the Transcaucasian Front. Well, he's just the same now. I'll mention you to him and I'm certain it'll be passed on to the chief himself."

Romanenko raised his brows so significantly as he pronounced the word "himself" that Voropayev knew at once whom he meant.

It was a small company that sat down to dinner — four generals and three diplomats. Voropayev was the eighth invited, and was introduced in a few indistinct words, which made him rather unpleasantly mysterious, like a poor relation. Everyone fancied he was about to ask for something either for himself or local needs and so felt uncomfortable beforehand.

He was in a curiously lighthearted mood, inclined to be witty, and this was not often the case lately. It seemed almost as though he was trying to attract all four generals and three diplomats and had some success. By the time dinner was over, it seemed as though there were eight generals at table. Romanenko told them a good deal about Voropayev; ruthlessly depicting the circumstances of his past with a view to censuring his present mode of life. But Voropayev found supporters; the generals declared that he was a hundred per cent right and that, as he had done his share of the fighting, he could not do better than go to work among the people.

The diplomats changed the subject with vague jokes, but on the whole were on his side, too.

Voropayev talked of country life as though he had been living that way for years. He did not envy Romanenko, who was going to Yugoslavia in a few days' time, or the diplomat who was going to the States. They would all see many new things, while he stayed at home in Sophia Ivanovna's house, where the ceilings had not yet been plastered and he could see the dust, disturbed by the mice, fall at night, and he would go out in the rain to give his lectures or to write letters to the front for the illiterate.

Voropayev had been mounting the social ladder for many years and had grown accustomed to taking a position today higher than that he had held yesterday, and to expecting that tomorrow he would rise still higher and find happiness in this continual rise and growth.

But now he thought differently. Now he wanted to go back, down again to the sources of life and human strength; to go back—not because he had become morally impoverished, but by way of taking a new run before a very high jump —and the urge was as powerful as his climb had once been.

After dinner, notwithstanding Voropayev's protests, Romanenko insisted on accompanying him home in the car.

"Well, of course, you've a long way to go yet, before your house looks like Prince Vorontsov's palace at Alupka," he said, looking over Sophia Ivanovna's house, "still, the place is livable. Who've you got in here?"

Voropayev told him briefly, without going into details.

"Let's go in and look at the rooms," Romanenko suggested, and led the way without waiting for an invitation. His attentions were somewhat rough and crude.

While he was getting into his car, after having looked at the house, he said in a patronizing tone:

"The old woman's a terror, but the young one's not bad, not bad at all. . . Well, I'll see that the people over there send you some building materials and coal. But still, what about you and me going back to Moscow together, eh?"

Voropayev said goodbye rather stiffly. He was almost on the verge of an outburst.

Next morning, just as he had come down to Lena's room for breakfast, and

as usual, was sitting there without his artificial limb, and with little Tanechka clambering on his knee, there was a ring of spurs outside, and, knocking lightly at the door, Romanenko made an impressive appearance.

"Peace be on this house!" he announced in a powerful voice, greeting the old woman respectfully and bowing to Lena, who was making the bed in the corner. "Heavens, what lovely buns! I'd eat a dozen of them only I haven't time. Up with you, Alexei Veniaminovich, you're wanted. . . Come on, get him into harness," he said to Lena.

"What's the idea?—after all, I'm not under your orders," Voropayev said in a challenging tone, and Romanenko did well not to answer.

A minute or so later they were racing over the highway, wet with the morning hoarfrost. It was going to be a wonderful day, which was rare for February. Veiled in bluish-white mist, the fiery sea glimmered on the horizon. The mountains smoked. The clouds were not sailing but soaring upwards. A barefoot girl with a bunch of snowdrops in her hand was climbing the track.

"Wait a minute!" Voropayev stopped the car and beckoned to her. "Whose little girl are you?"

"Tvorozhenkovs'," she replied with a peevish toss of her shoulders.

"Which Tvorozhenkovs?"

"Why—that live right opposite you—as if you didn't know them!" she snapped.

"Oh, yes, I remember now—you're Lenka Bare-Knees, that's what they call you, isn't it?"

"That's right!" the little girl answered, laughing. "You gave me a fright, asking who I was, as if you didn't really know."

"Give me those flowers, will you?"

"I thought I might see Comrade Stalin driving by. Well, never mind, you can have them, if you want them."

Voropayev offered the bunch of flowers to Romanenko, but the man pushed his hand gently away.

"Not for me, thanks . . . you'll give them to some lady friend. . . ."

It was long past midday when Voropayev said goodbye to the general to whom Romanenko had introduced him. On this occasion he had lunch with some members of the General Staff whom he did not know and a deputy people's commissar. As was natural, the talk ran on the course that the sessions were taking and the meetings between the members of the conference, who had said that, and who had hinted at this, but, interesting as it all was, Voropayev hardly listened to what was going on at the table.

He was excited and worn out by the talk that had just taken place. Once more—and this time officially—he had received a very flattering offer to return to active service.

"It isn't your legs we need, but your head and your gifts as a war writer."

"A month ago I was nobody here, now I'm mixed up in all sorts of local affairs. And there aren't enough people, anyway."

"And you aren't afraid of getting lost in all these petty routine jobs?"

"Not in the least."

"Well, go ahead then—and good luck!"

Now that he had declined the offer to return to the world he had once known, everything around seemed disturbing and uncomfortable. As he went out with Romanenko into a yard covered with rough gravel, his artificial foot slipped.

"Be sure you ring me up and come and see me when you go up to Moscow for your little boy," Romanenko said. His words had a touch of finality.

"That goes without saying. One gets bored here at times. I'll be anxious for all the news when I get to Moscow," Voropayev said conciliatingly, with a momentary pang of regret that he himself had cut off all roads to the capital.

"You're doing a foolish thing, Alexei Veniaminovich, a very foolish thing," Romanenko began again very earnestly when somebody called them back and told them to go to the park on the south side of the palace.

"Both of us?" asked Romanenko, frankly wondering what he was to do with Voropayev and hoping they would say: "No, only you, Comrade General," which would give him a chance to say goodbye and send Voropayev home by himself.

"No, Comrade General, only the Colonel is wanted," came the unexpected answer.

Romanenko turned a deep red.

"All right, Alexei Veniaminovich," he said, avoiding Voropayev's eye. "I'll go back to my place and as soon as you're through, get into my car and drive home. Well, so long."

They took an affectionate, if hasty leave of each other, and Voropayev, feeling rather awkward on his friend's account, followed his new guide. They turned the corner of the house, passed the sentry, then Voropayev's companion halted and so did he. The man looked at him uncertainly and glanced aside, and at that moment Voropayev heard a voice it was impossible not to recognize.

"This way, Comrade Voropayev, don't be shy."

But Voropayev did not stir—he could not.

He saw Stalin.

Stalin, wearing a light spring tunic and cap, was talking to an old gardener, standing by a vine that clung with great gnarled tendrils to a high trellis against the wall. Looking at Voropayev he was still explaining something to the man that apparently interested them both deeply.

"Try this method, don't be afraid," Stalin said, "I've tested it myself. It won't let you down."

The gardener looked at the speaker with bewildered, and at the same time childlike admiration and held up his spread fingers in doubt.

"Somehow one's afraid to go against science, Joseph Vissarionovich. In the tsar's day we had big experts here, but they never tried going to such lengths."

"There were plenty of things they didn't try," Stalin observed. "In the tsar's day people didn't grow up properly either, but what of it—we shouldn't follow the old ways. Be bolder in your experiments! Grapes and lemons are needed in other parts of the country besides yours."

"It's the climate, Joseph Vissarionovich, it puts a full stop to anything like this. Look how tender and delicate the plant is, how could it ever stand a frost?" the gardener said, indicating the vine against the wall.

"Train it to stand a harsh climate, make it hardy, don't be afraid! You and I are southerners and still we don't feel too bad in the north," Stalin concluded, coming forward to meet Voropayev.

"Oh Lord!" the gardener muttered under his breath.

"He's well to the fore if there's something foolish to be done, but when it comes to answering for it . . . then you can't get him to budge," Stalin remarked, and Voropayev was startled to see that he was coming to greet him with outstretched hands and an all-embracing smile. "They tell me you are leading the collective farms hereabouts to the assault. Very interesting idea, too, if perhaps not quite right, in my opinion."

Stalin shook hands and still holding Voropayev's arm, led him towards the little table and wicker armchairs, one of which was occupied by Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov. Every now and again one or another of the diplomatic staff approached him and whispered something in his ear, and he would reply in an undertone. His hands were busy with the papers on the table before him. He shrugged his shoulders with an apologetic smile as though excusing himself for being busy.

Stalin was unbelievably calm. At the moment he appeared to be interested in Voropayev's life more than in anything else in the world, except maybe the faintly blue sky, warm and languidly close to the sea, at which he glanced from time to time with a kindly twinkle in his eyes.

Voropayev thought to himself that Stalin had not aged at all since he had seen him last at the parade on November 7th, 1941, but he had changed markedly in another way.

His face, which was familiar to him, down to the smallest wrinkle, had acquired new and impressive features which Voropayev rejoiced to notice.

Stalin's countenance was bound to alter, because the people looked into it, as they would into a mirror in which they saw themselves reflected, and they, the people, had undergone a change that endowed them with greater majesty.

Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov helped to overcome the embarrassment of the first few minutes and then the talk became general.

"They have been telling me about you," Stalin began at once, "and to my mind you've done right in choosing to work in the country. Unfortunately we still have many people who prefer being bureaucrats in Moscow to taking charge of affairs in the provinces."

He glanced at Molotov who smiled as though he knew whom these words referred to.

"Yes, there are still people of that kind," Stalin continued, "but their day is nearly over. . . Tell us what you consider the most urgent needs. Don't be

bashful, speak up." Stalin settled himself more comfortably in his armchair and reached for a cigarette; for some reason he hadn't his pipe.

"People," said Voropayev. "And in the first place—capable, clever people, Comrade Stalin."

Stalin chuckled, and glanced at Molotov.

"Clever people are needed everywhere," Molotov remarked with a smile.

"Clever people have to be made, Comrade Colonel," Stalin said in a brisk tone with a note of command in it. "You have to make them yourself on the spot without waiting for them to be showered down on your heads from Moscow. What do you think? Who said that good workers are born only in Moscow?"

"Of course, they grow here as well, but very slowly, and the need is urgent and the place is pretty bare," Voropayev replied, feeling that he could not count on Stalin's support in this.

"And how are you getting on yourself?—Not finding things so easy, eh?" Stalin asked with a quick side glance, as if he was asking not so much because he wanted to know what must have been already known to him, but to hear the tone of the answer.

"No, things aren't too easy."

"Well, it's a good thing to hear you say so plainly. Sometimes one asks how a fellow's getting on and he says 'fine,' and then it turns out he doesn't get a dinner every day. . . Yes, things aren't easy yet, but you can tell the collective farmers that soon everything will take a turn for the better. The Party is going to tackle and solve the food problems with the same energy that it once applied to the problems of industrialization. We shall do everything so that people may live well. Better than before the war. Tell us about the local people—who they are and where they come from and what they're doing."

Voropayev pondered a moment, choosing the best person to start with, but evidently Stalin thought he was searching for a way to formulate his answer and a look of displeasure came into his face.

"Don't search for formulas, give us real life sketches of people. We'll manage with the formulating ourselves."

Then Voropayev told them eagerly about the people he knew well—Victor Ogarnov, Paussov, Tsimbal, Maria Bogdanovna with her children's sanatorium, Anya Stupina, the Podnebesko couple, Gorodtsov and all those with whom he had shared dreams of the future.

"And you told us you were in sad need of people!" said Molotov in surprise. "Why, you've got a regular training ground there. We'll be coming to borrow a few people from you."

Stalin was silent for a long while, lighting a cigarette and puffing at it.

"If people like these Podnebeskos were given the power," he said softly, as though to himself, "we'd get moving at a good pace. . . Or that girl Stupina . . . her hatred of the Germans alone would make life worth living. Provided, of course, the power were properly directed. You ought to take care of Tsimbal. . . Stand up for him. Restless old fellows like that are badly needed, the young people look up to them. . . Well, and who else have you got?"

And so he went on asking, pondering on things, suddenly drawing into himself, as though comparing what he had just heard with something heard earlier, determining where the truth lay, then livening up delightedly with every new name.

When Voropayev told him of how Gorodtsov was longing to be back working in grain, and saw wheat fields stretching away to the horizon in his dreams, Stalin got to his feet and paced up and down, deep in thought.

Voropayev got up, too, wondering whether he should remain standing by the table or follow Stalin, till Molotov set his doubts at rest.

"Sit where you are. Joseph Vissarionovich likes to walk up and down while he's thinking things over."

As he returned to the table, Stalin said:

"This longing for the grain fields is good. It's a desire for the main thing. Still, grapes, figs, and apples are also necessities. You can tell him . . . tell this Gorodtsov . . . he's an army man, he'll understand, that you're like the second echelon, the reserves. Once we've solved the grain problem, we'll consider your case."

Suddenly remembering his talk with the gardener, he grew animated.

"This gardener, now—he's been working here for forty-five years and he's

still afraid of science. This won't grow, he says, and that won't do. In Pushkin's day eggplants used to be brought from Greece to Odessa as a rarity. We started to grow tomatoes in Murmansk fifteen years ago. Grapes, lemons and figs have to be pushed on northwards, too. We were told that cotton would never thrive in the Kuban, and in the Ukraine, and it did. The whole idea is—you must really want a thing and put your shoulder to the wheel and get it. You can tell him this," Stalin repeated. "What was it he said, this Gorodtsov—that he saw grain in his dreams?"

"Yes, he said: 'I see myself reaping wheat in my dreams. I wake up and my shoulders ache with work and there's a smell of fresh grain in the room.'"

"Well, and maybe Gorodtsov ought to be transferred to wheat-growing in the steppes after all, eh?" Stalin suddenly suggested. "A Russian is born to grow grain. Think it over. Talk to your top men. And now, who else have you got there to tell us about?"

Deeply moved by a conversation that had set his soul aglow, Voropayev thrust his hand into his overcoat pocket, and pulled out together with his handkerchief, the bunch of snowdrops picked that morning. They dropped on the ground, and the guide who had conducted him here and who was near at hand, picked them up. Voropayev put them back in his pocket.

Stalin watched him with curiosity.

"As far as I know, pockets aren't made for keeping flowers in," he said with conviction. "Give them to me and this is what we'll do with them," and he added them to the flowers arranged in a wide shallow bowl on the table. "But perhaps, you meant them for someone."

Voropayev told him about little Lena Tvorozhenkova and how she had been dreaming of giving the snowdrops to Stalin when he drove past, and now her dream had come true.

Stalin looked thoughtful, wondering what he could send her in return, then calling someone, asked for cakes to be put up in a nice little basket.

As soon as the basket was brought, Voropayev asked leave to go.

"You've done well to act as you did," Stalin said at parting. "Don't take any notice of anyone who comes down on you for it. We have too many officials as it is. You've done well, very well!"

And, as he looked into Voropayev's eyes, his face suddenly lit up as though a gleam of sunshine passed over it.

....It was near sunset when Voropayev alighted from the car at his own gate and mounted the outside staircase to his own room without going in to speak to Lena.

She came up and knocked at the door. "Korytov is grumbling and swearing, he's been looking for you all over the place," she informed him in her quiet even tones. "I told him a general had come for you and he said: 'I know him, he's boozing somewhere with those generals instead of attending to his work.'"

"Send him to the devil—that Korytov of yours. You know, Lena, I've been to see Stalin just now.... Oh, yes, take these cakes to Lena Tvorozhenkova .... it's a present from Stalin."

Lena started forward and stared with a voiceless question in her eyes.

"He said I'd done right."

She went up to him silently.

"I'll lie down for a while," he said, "I don't want to see anyone...."

"I won't let anyone disturb you, lie quiet. Do you want anything to eat? Mother got some dolphin's liver today, so the dinner's a treat."

"No, I won't have anything to eat, thanks."

He lay down on the blanket. The room had been heated a short while before. Lena sat down by the bed and then, rather haltingly at first, and afterwards with a glow of animation, he went aloud over all that had taken place. He spoke in character for each person in turn, so Lena could understand clearly how it had all come about, and she smiled and spread out her hands in amazement as she followed the course of his narrative. Suddenly he broke off in the middle of a word, and passed his hands through his hair.

"But, look here, I can't keep all this to myself! How can I carry such a treasure about with me, hidden from others? Run and bring your Korytov...."

"No, there's no point in bringing him, Alexei Veniaminovich," Lena said firmly. "There wasn't any talk about Korytov, was there? Was he invited to see Stalin? No, he wasn't! Then why should you tell him you've made

a report on the district? He'd only be offended."

Acknowledging the correctness of her reasoning, Voropayev smiled:

"Besides the fact that jealousy and envy would be aroused I don't think it would show you in a very good light—it might look too much like self-advertisement."

"So I'm to keep it to myself?"

"Why should you? You do what you were advised to do, but surely there's no need to talk to everyone about it!"

"It's all for love of him, nothing more, you understand, Lena, all for love of him."

"Love's strength lies in deeds, Alexei Veniaminovich—everyone has too much to say, as it is, and too few deeds," and, getting up, she went quickly to the door.

He did not try to stop her. But when she had reached the balcony, he called after her through the open door:

"I've grown younger today, do you hear? I've grown a thousand years younger."

"What did you say?" she called back, puzzled, but he knew by her voice that she was smiling.

He called in a still louder tone.

"A thousand years younger."

"That's right! Go on with it—it'll do you good!"

"What's that? Eh?" and he kept calling out to her so loudly that they must have been heard at Tvorozhenkovs' across the street. But she did not come back.

Her advice did not seem so good to him next morning. He would have to tell people that Stalin had sent for him, and no matter how awkward the conversation with Korytov on the subject might be, there was no avoiding it.

So Voropayev plunged into it without any preliminaries.

Korytov listened, looking out of the window and rubbing his temple.

"Naturally, mm-m, naturally," he put in every now and then. "So you kept to your own particular circle? Oh, naturally. But . . . why didn't you mention Alexei Ivanovich Sukhov? Our best team leader? Or say, a word or two about the tobacco-growers?"

"I wasn't sent for to make a report on the district as a whole, I simply talked of the people I knew."

"Oh, yes, naturally. Naturally," Korytov repeated, still not looking at Voropayev. It was obvious that he hesitated to ask whether the talk had touched on him, and that he was extremely nervous about it. "Well, since this is an individual case, we won't generalize it," he decided.

"Generalize?—what do you mean?"

"I mean we won't bring it before the Party Bureau and it won't be for general circulation."

Voropayev looked at him in astonishment.

"I can understand that you feel envious. I should probably react in the same way if I were in your place. But how can I keep silent about the message sent through me to Gorodtsov, and the things that were said concerning the Podnebeskos?"

"You've told me what happened, I'll keep it in mind, we'll think it over and then decide. What has it got to do with Gorodtsov? You've only to mention it to him for it to be all over the place in no time: he'll say . . . they were talking about me, and this and that was said, and he may distort the whole thing into the bargain. No, I absolutely forbid it."

"This is what you call—not generalizing? Well, I'll think about it, but it seems to me you're quite wrong."

They have parted, having wearied each other, and knowing for certain that they would never be friends.

The news got about very rapidly. Three days later Tsimbal and Gorodtsov descended upon Voropayev, informing him that the Ogarnovs, Yuri Podnebesko and Anya Stupina were getting a lift on a lorry coming in this direction. The guests did not mention the purpose of their visit but their portentiously grave looks and suppressed air of excitement told much.

Stupina burst in breathless. She did not greet anyone, but, pressing her hand to her throat, stood still in the corner of the room furthest from the lamp. Varvara Ogarnova, who had been talking in lively tones on the stairs, tiptoed into the room, her new shoes creaking. Young Podnebesko and Victor Ogarnov greeted Voropayev with a nod, as though they had come to a meeting.

Lena attempted to engage the guests' attention, but they glanced round at

hor in such astonishment that she was abashed.

No one spoke. They were all waiting for Voropayev to begin.

He sat at the desk, watching the faces.

"I am going to tell you a very amazing episode from my own life," he began. "This is, of course, my own personal experience. I am confiding it to you because you are friends of mine. You understand me, don't you? And each of you may draw his own personal conclusions. A few days ago I had the good fortune to be sent for by Comrade Stalin, I got there just as he was finishing a conversation with an old gardener. . . ."

"Must have been Ivan Zakharych, was it?" Tsimbal interrupted. "Well, well!"

"I don't know his name. I went in—and at first I was so nervous I couldn't see Stalin. . . ."

"Stop, hold on there a minute," Gorodtsov interrupted with a sudden movement. "Tell the story in the proper order, Alexei Veniaminovich, like I always do. Where was this? And who else was present?"

"What does it matter where it was. You'd better follow the main points of the story."

"You must tell me everything, if you want me to get the main points. . . Start at the very beginning: you go in, and . . ." Gorodtsov prompted encouragingly, fearing that the speaker might pass over the most important details.

There was silence in the room. The visitors stood up in their places and drew closer to Voropayev. He moved out from behind the desk and stood in the middle of the room.

"Stalin was talking about something to the gardener, recommending him a certain method of growing or grafting, and the gardener was raising objections and saying that there were many things our climate wouldn't allow."

Tsimbal was about to make some remark, but the others hissed at him to be silent.

"Comrade Stalin advised him to be bolder in his experiments, and not be scared of science."

"Then it's clear—it must have been Ivan Zakharych," Tsimbal exclaimed. "He's been playing Blind Man's Buff with nature for forty years now."

"Sh-sh-sh!"

"And then Comrade Stalin talked to me and scolded me a bit for the storming. . . ."

"So, it's been reported to him already," Gorodtsov said, proud of the work of the Party apparatus. "Just look at that now! That's what you call prompt work!"

Voropayev turned crimson.

"Are you going to give me a chance to tell the story or not?"

"Yes, of course, go ahead, go ahead. . . Only you're a bit like a delayed action mine, it gets on a fellow's nerves. Tell a straight tale. Can't you put it together better!" Gorodtsov wiped the perspiration from his brow. Why hadn't Stalin sent for him? He would not have muddled up anything, he was sure, or kept anything back, either.

". . . As I was saying, he scolded me a bit about the storming methods, then started to ask me all about the people working here, and how they worked and who they were. I say, move back a trifle, what's the idea of huddling in a heap round me? . . So I told him about you all."

They listened, breathless, gazing at him fixedly.

"I told him about Tsimbal. . . ."

"You told Stalin?" Stupina asked.

". . . and about you, Yuri and Natasha, and you, Gorodtsov, and you, Victor, and you, Annushka, and about how hard it was for you, and what a lot you were doing, how you got over obstacles, and how you're building your life. . . ."

They said nothing.

"I told him that you kept seeing wheat fields in your dreams, Gorodtsov."

"Oh, Lord, you don't mean to say you told him that, Comrade Voropayev . . . how could you let your tongue run away with you? And what did he say?"

"He paced up and down, and then he said that this was a longing for the main thing, the big thing. And he told me to tell you that we're like the second echelon, the reserves, here. When the grain question has been solved, our turn will come. But, he says, if Gorodtsov finds it too much for him, send him back to the steppe, to the grain fields there."

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"What? Me? To the steppe? No, thanks, this is where your communiqué is a

flop. You won't get me to budge from where I am now. That's what you should have told him. I'll show what I can do without any of your steppes. That's what you should have told him. Just that and no less!"

"All right, that'll do, neighbour," Yuri said. "No harm's done. See the trouble Stalin takes over everything, you can feel it, can't you? He was thinking of you."

"Anything wrong with me?—to make you start all that talk about me? Am I a sick man or what? No, you didn't say the right thing about me."

Annushka Stupina emerged from her dark corner, and parting the knot of people around Voropayev, stood before him, pale and speechless. She asked nothing, simply waiting for whatever was to fall to her lot.

Voropayev put his arm around her trembling shoulders.

"I told him about you and how you tramped across Europe, and struggled with the Germans in the camps, and what a holy hatred of the enemy you had nursed through all your trials. And he. . . ."

"Stalin?" her lips said.

"Yes. He said—if the hatred alone of that girl Stupina. . . ."

"He said—the girl Stupina?"

"Yes. If the hatred alone of that girl Stupina could be directed in the right way, it could move mountains."

"It's true. It can. What he said is right. And he called me by my name?"

She flung her arms around Voropayev's neck and hugging him tightly, cried:

"Oh, why did you tell him about me? How can I carry on now, eh? Tell me."

"What do you mean?" Voropayev asked, he could not understand why she was so upset.

"How can I carry on now? Stalin said that Stupina could move mountains. . . And what have I moved? You've given me away! I was just getting along somehow, nobody knew me and now—suppose Comrade Stalin should suddenly remember about me and wonder: what's that Anya Stupina doing?—go and find out, somebody. . . Oh, I'm terrified to think of it! . . Of course, he may forget all about me, but suppose he doesn't. . . I'll never know a minute's peace from now on."

"Half a minute, Annushka—we're none of us going to know another minute's peace after the talk. Let's have the whole story, Veniaminovich, from beginning to end. No secrets here."

So Voropayev told them what Stalin had said: that the government was taking up the food problem, as they had taken up that of industry earlier, that the difficulties were temporary and they had to consider how they were to revive all branches of the district's economy.

They sighed. Victor Ogarnov added:

"Feels like as if we got an award, only we don't know what it's for."

"What kind of experiments were they that Ivan Zakharych had to make?" Yuri asked. "We've got to get hold of this Ivan Zakharych and wring the truth out of him—see what advice he's been given. He's a close old chap. Met him yesterday and he never let out a word of it to me."

"As if he would! Although the bald-headed old devil won't do anything about it himself anyway," Tsimbal said, then, turning to Gorodtsov: "Let's go to see him."

"Good idea!" said the other. "There's something practical to make a start with. Let's be off!"

Annushka Stupina decided to go with the rest, though Lena tried to keep her.

"No, I'm going with them, I can't stay behind," Annushka insisted. "I feel different now, Lena, you know. I feel very grown up, all of a sudden, as though I'd been given a responsible post. I won't stay behind for anything, how can I?" and she ran out of the room, drawing the others after her. As the cart moved off, she burst out singing, and for a long time her high, almost childish voice could be heard above the noises of the street.

CHAPTER EIGHT

At the beginning of April the Third Ukrainian Front advanced through Hungary towards Austria.

The motorized troops surged on like spring floods, irresistible, sweeping away all obstacles. All makes were represented: GAZ, STZ, MI, jeeps, the low-slung beetle-like Peugeots, the Tatras built back to front, with a spare tyre up forward and the engine behind; Dodges, Chevrolets, Mercedes, Hansas, DKW's,

Horsches, Wanderers, Hanemags, Adlers, Steuers, Fiats, Jaguars, Auto-unions, Isoto-Fraschinis, Hispano-Suizas, and many nameless vehicles, compounds of odd parts, machines that it would be hard to find a name for or determine type or make—and they all took part in the fighting. Rear units hurried after the first echelon troops.

Hundreds of dun bullocks with sharp horns and thousands of tall big-boned horses with docked tails like brushes were harnessed to country carts, covered waggons, carozzas, high two-wheeled arbas, phaetons, dogcarts, wicker-carts, and gun carriages; an endless number of bicycles, women's, men's, racing, children's and carriers; ancient dormeuses and palace coaches with gilded coats-of-arms, light blue Viennese carriages of the century before last, creaking and slow, with folding steps, high boxes for the coachman, and little railed-off steps for the footmen at the back, camels from the steppes of Astrakhan, donkeys from Tajikistan, shaggy Mongolian ponies—all dragged or carried the baggage of the advancing army.

The infantry, as such, had ceased to exist. Everyone drove or rode. No one went on foot except the herdsmen who were driving the immense flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and pigs, raising a slow cloud of dust at the tail of the army column. As a matter of fact, the herdsmen themselves were seated, swaying with weary melancholy, on the backs of cows.

The dozens of orders issued on reorganizing transport and maintaining march discipline did not always achieve their effect. Now that the troops were nearing their long looked-for goal, speed was the word. Nobody was particularly anxious to wear out his boots on Hungarian or Austrian asphalt, and each dreamed of riding to victory on captured vehicle or animal.

The regiments, weary after the prolonged battles at Budapest and Lake Balaton, and sadly thinned, with an unusually high percentage of wounded who had remained with the ranks, were now covering fifty kilometres a night, a hundred in twenty-four hours. What infantry could compete with these mounted troops who fed their own cattle and horses, fuelled their own motorcycles and cars, asking for neither gasoline nor food, for nothing except ammunition, and insisting only on the uninterrupted movement ahead, always ahead, to the war's end.

The march on Vienna had to be sudden and precise, and each understood this perfectly, and the first to be left behind were the bullocks. The bullock carts carried wounded—this was also against regulations—they did not proceed to the hospitals in the east, in the rear, but went on ahead behind their divisions at a decent distance where they hindered no one. A quantity of the goods that had encumbered the lorries were now transferred to the bullock carts. The booty that was not required in battle was also loaded on to the bullock carts which made up the rearmost of the rear, moving very slowly but still keeping up with the general stream.

There was not enough room on the narrow though well-made Austrian roads for the stream of bullocks and horse traffic, and it was stranded and entangled at crossroads and temporary bridges, to the delight of the German pilots who bombed these giant targets unceasingly. During the raids, however, the men did not scatter or break up, but in the confusion endeavoured to find some loophole through which they might slip and overtake the rest.

At the approaches to Vienna the horse and bullock baggage trains lagged two or three marches behind the rest, while the roads were monopolized by madly racing lorries and passenger cars.

. . . The second echelon of the army was about thirty-five kilometres southeast of Vienna.

Unfortunately, a civilian can have no very clear idea of what a second echelon is and as no one has described the life of this original organism up to now, there is none to whom the interested reader may turn for information.

A "second echelon" or "Echelon B" as it is sometimes called, is what might be called in the theatre "the people behind the scenes." The actors play their parts while the people who prepared the show, watch it wearily and even indifferently from the wings, the stage boxes and balcony. The "second echelon" of the theatre is made up of the costumiers, dressers, carpenters, sceneshifters,

mechanics and men who provide the light and sound effects.

The second echelon are not the soloists, but the workmen, not the heroes, but those who wait upon heroism, not those who decide but those who ensure the decisions, the prosaic accountancy of warfare.

In the second echelon are the hospitals, stores, workshops, printing presses and editorial offices. Here boots are mended, breeches patched, tanks repaired, ammunition and gasolene stocked and distributed, losses and awards, heroism and cowardice registered.

Here justice is dealt out. Here scandalmongers are looked into and shortcomings accounted for. Thanks to all this, life in the second echelon is not without its elements of stability, regularity and system of a kind peculiar to the rear. There is always more order and punctuality here than anywhere else. Sometimes people invite each other for the evening and gather for a game of cards.

The people of the second echelon are old rankers rather than army men, but at the same time they are a very important element in warfare and the soldier's heroism is unthinkable without them.

Alexandra Goreva left the second echelon taking her brown attaché case with her, in an open jeep. The squat little car was soon bowling eastward from the town along the smooth roads, taking the sharp bends easily. When they were close to the Danube and to the famous wide motor road that runs from Bratislava to Vienna and is mentioned in all the guidebooks, they turned onto it and rushed in the direction of the city.

Fighting had been going on for over two days now and was particularly fierce in the eastern sector, the Prater and Danube Canal area, where Dr. Goreva had arrived. In two or three places dead horses dammed up the canal, and the tommy gunners crawled across these slaughtered beasts as over a bridge, to the side still occupied by the Germans.

Hourly the units burst into houses and into city blocks, rendering them unfit for enemy defence and occupying new streets. Huge numbers of prisoners were being taken all the time. Sometimes they ran from under fire and then, even after they had been in safety for a while, still ran with their hands up.

She rushed to the place where General Korolenko's division was located. Korolenko was a good-natured Ukrainian with a paunch, on which he was in the habit of resting his folded plump white hands, like a woman. His courage and cunning were well known, and his division was one of the best. Now it was fighting for the Danube Canal. Dr. Goreva, who had come here to look into the work of the medical battalion, decided on the spot to stay with the division until Vienna was liberated, and start immediately for one of the spearhead battalions.

General Korolenko treated Goreva to an excellent breakfast and let her go, eyeing her first from the head of the stairs, then from the balcony, and calling out to her twice merely to see her turn, throw back her head and smile up at him. He even spread his hands with satisfaction like a motorcar fan seeing a new make for the first time.

Without a moment's delay, Dr. Goreva plunged into the nervous, crazy life of street fighting. It was possible to get in touch with the battalion by phone but even the battalions did not know what was going on in the companies. Notwithstanding the powerful mortar fire and the terrific artillery bombardment from across the Danube, only a few wounded were brought up in small parties to the battalion and regimental dressing stations.

At the end of the day Goreva was seated behind the armour of a self-propelled gun. Somewhere in the neighbouring division that had broken through almost to the heart of the city, in that labyrinth of streets, narrow and deep as wells, the commander of the spearhead regiment, Golyshev had been wounded, and she had received a phone call, asking her to come and have a look at him because he refused to go to hospital. She was not far from him. But what looked near enough on the map was divided by battle in reality.

The gun was rushing through the smoke of conflagrations and the furious hail of machine-gun fire.

She jumped off before it came to a halt. Someone caught her in his arms.

"Be careful here, please. Sixteen steps down. This is our command post."

"Somehow I can't understand this

Viennese apathy," Goreva was saying an hour later to Major Golyshev, whose condition caused her no anxiety, because the shell splinter had been successfully removed. "For instance, in the little towns— I've seen this myself many a time—men harnessed themselves to our guns, and carried away the wounded under fire. But here, in Vienna, I see only indifferent people; either they're afraid of everything in the world, or else nothing matters to them any more."

"Things are different in the working class districts," Golyshev told her.

"A different mood altogether. They'll throw their arms round your neck and kiss you and weep on your shoulder. But in this part, of course... And besides, that, Vienna is so hungry, so cowed and frightened by Hitler, so confused by all manner of alarmist rumours, that it does not know how to act. And after all, the battle is still going on... But aren't they smart at stealing!" he exclaimed with an almost childlike astonishment in his voice. "You occupy a decent sort of house, and before you've time to look round, you see people poking around in it: please allow us to take our things away, Herr Major, they say. All right—bitte, bitte! The fighting goes on and we push off and occupy another house. And what do you think? The same people turn up: allow us, Herr Major, and so on... But damn you, you told us that house yonder was yours! No, that was our uncle's house, this is our home, they explain. Well, you ignore them altogether, but after a while they grab stuff from each other right under your eyes and you have to part them. It's a pity we have to leave the place," he said suddenly, without looking at Goreva, apparently talking to himself. "So much blood has been shed because of them, and they'll never be able to run their lives themselves... This is the sort of place where you have to roll up your sleeves and... The things we could get done here—you and I! We ought to have Alexei here—Voropayev."

And now he scrutinized her coldly like a stranger.

She understood the glance and did not turn away her tired eyes that now had neither expression nor fire in them.

Her face, much thinner now since the battles in Budapest where he had seen her last, did not seem so beautiful to him as then. The shadow of despair lay upon it, an almost tangible layer, ageing its fine, proud contour.

She might have been taken for near forty, though Golyshev knew well that she was barely thirty, he remembered giving her a birthday present in Voropayev's time. None of the burdens and hardships of wartime life work such havoc with a woman's face as spiritual loneliness.

Her dark eyes, always clear and audacious—Alexei had said he was sure they laughed even in her sleep—shone only at a third of their power, as though dying away in the depths of their blue-tinged orbits, her lips were cracked and thin, the corners drooped, the chin twitched nervously and she did not notice it.

The face was like a deserted house, in which nothing is ever as it is in an inhabited home.

Golyshev suddenly felt terribly sorry for her and, not knowing what to say, he withdrew his pale hand from under the bedclothes and held it out to her.

With a desperation that only women are capable of, she asked suddenly:

"Does he write to you?"

"Yes."

"What does he say?"

"He's starting something there, he's got a house, and a housekeeper, he goes to the collective farms, he's giving lectures, but I can see by the letters he isn't having an easy time of it... And you haven't had a line?"

"Not a line."

"I can understand how he feels, of course," Golyshev went on, after a pause, "and you mustn't take offence, if I say plain and straight—you've dropped out of his life a bit. Don't you think so?"

She did not feel whether she turned pale or red at that moment, she understood only one thing—that this idle conversation might prove of vital importance to her. And she resolved not to retreat, not to turn it off with a joke, but to push straight ahead without pause.

"Yes. It seems as if he's forgotten my very existence. He hasn't written for so long, he's trying to make me forget him, too, so that I'll leave him alone. But I can't do that. I love him. And he is so much mine that I can't take offence and I'm not afraid that

he may feel differently towards me. Only I'm very much ashamed that I'm lonely without him. But as soon as I'm free, he won't slip away from me, believe me," and she laughed involuntarily at the imaginary picture of her pursuit of Voropayev.

Golyshev looked at her steadily and mistrustfully and did not interrupt.

"You say he's mentioned a housekeeper in his letter... Believe me, that doesn't wound me. Voropayev has only one—only me—who is close to him. He loves me and needs me."

Golyshev said nothing.

"When all is said and done, you might ask him about me...."

"That's what I want to do. Will you let me ring you up when the reply comes?"

"Yes, of course," she said, striving to control her agitation. "I should like to know."

"I am doing it for your sake."

"Thanks. Now I have another question to ask. Only answer me honestly: has he, in your opinion—I mean, have I dropped so very far out of his life? Am I really no match for him?"

"Well, I don't really know what to say... Perhaps, you're no match just now. When a man's thrown out of gear, then everything's gone, his feelings, too. I don't know if you'll understand me. The affairs of our every-day existence play as important a part in love as emotions do. There comes a time when you love and long for each other, yet it's no use, the road's closed to that love. That is, of course, if you don't look upon love as mere amusement but as an enrichment of the soul...."

"Yes, so what—suppose you look at it like that?"

"Then it does happen—that things don't turn out right.

"I can't express it, but I know for certain that I'm right. When a man is growing, everything grows in him—his idea of love and duty, his demands on himself and others...."

"Go on—and then what?"

"Just a minute, don't keep urging me on... When a man is sick, when one sort of life has crashed down about his ears and the other hasn't been built up yet, he is all smothered in crumbled rubble and dust, and his feelings are all rubble and dust, and his hopes, too ... and at a time like that, it's better for a man to be alone."

"Sounds vague, I must say. I'd better wait for a letter from Alexei—perhaps he'll put it better...."

She went out with a sense of having gone through the mill and found it hard to stand.

Getting into the car, she sat at the back and not, as usual, with the driver, so that he wouldn't notice her face distorted with stifled sobs.

"Oh God, why am I not a good match for him?" she kept saying, thinking of Golyshev's words. "Could he have stopped loving me just because he's sick? What's gone wrong?"

Loneliness acted upon her like an attack of fever.

Hers had been a joyless childhood. Her mother died when Shura was just over a year old, and her upbringing had been left to her father. She had nothing to look back on in her childhood—neither theatre shows, nor Christmas trees, nor films, not even the taste of sweets.

Whenever she dreamed of anything in the distant past, it was sure to be mournful, and practically always the same: she was sitting at home in the dreary, silent room, waiting for her father. It seemed to her that all her childhood had been spent in waiting for her father, and her youth had only made itself felt when she ceased to wait for him. Strangely enough, now that she had grown up and known independence, she had to return to that early loneliness once more and wait, wait, not daring to glance round for dread.

Shura was good-looking and she knew it, but the tragedy was that hardly anyone ever made love to her. At the institute a comrade once explained this to her as follows:

"Beauties are always full of whims. They expect a lot, too, and besides," he added with a short laugh, "all pretty girls are booked up by someone... That seems to be a law."

She was longing to tell him that she wasn't booked up by anyone, that she wasn't full of whims and expected no more than any of her friends, who were so burdened with love affairs that these seemed the most important thing on their minds, but she refrained.

Reviewing her own character, however,

she acknowledged that she was rather cold, did not find it easy to get on with people, and probably gave the impression of being a proud, supercilious creature, though she could reproach herself only with unsociability.

She liked many people and—as far as she could judge—many were attracted by her, but somehow their friendship had never developed into intimacy.

Allusions to flowers and moonlight, cryptic remarks about affinities made her blush for the speaker. She could never understand why anyone should stoop to such trivialities when they were thinking of things that were good.

She had to admit that no one whom she could really love had crossed her path and perhaps never would, for a bride of thirty wasn't such a find. She had thrown herself heart and soul into her work. An excellent future was foretold for her. A future? What future could there be without happiness?

It was different with Voropayev. In the first place, he had never courted her, but had shared with her an emotional experience he had not known before he met her. He would come to her simply, bringing his favourite books, his squabbles, and his troubles. He would send his friends to her for a night's lodging, had worried over her patients as much as she had when their condition was grave, and had interested himself in the affairs of her hospitals as though they were his own. And she, the cold, proud, aloof, the "stone flower" as they had called her, would ring him up at headquarters and invite him to come and see her, or simply drop in to see him in the army political department's dugout, and listen, her eyelids drooping with weariness, to his accounts of some meetings of the political instructors, or about the soldiers' couplets he was making a collection of, and then sit dozing, soothed by the low tinkle of the telephone bell, the creak of the thin plywood door, warped with the heat, and listen to his gruff baritone which by morning had sunk to a hoarse drunken bass.

It is hard for a woman to settle her life satisfactorily if she wants to be sincere always. It is true that if you have made a name for yourself as a very able surgeon, it seems stupid to sit at home, darning your husband's socks, especially if you are no great hand at mending your own stockings. But she was ready to do even this. What qualities should a model wife have? Should she be able to cook a dinner? Should she occupy herself with her husband's affairs? Somehow, it appeared that Dr. Goreva knew how to do very few things. She was an abominable housekeeper, she could not sing, she was not musical, she did not draw, or discuss literature, though she read a great deal and remembered clearly what she had read. Her patients were attached to her, her comrades respected her, her woman friends were a little afraid of her and their friendship was not of long duration. She even got her clothes on the quiet—no one knew where she had them made, or what her own taste in dress was like, but at the same time she always looked better dressed than others, though she did not keep up with the fashions.

"I suppose I'm just an old maid," she thought to herself.

"What would Alexei do in my place? Men are more straightforward although they aren't so inventive as all that. But they aren't afraid to rush at a barrier, head on, they aren't afraid to fight for what they want, while we only sit and wait until they win us. Isn't that ridiculous? If a woman could choose her husband as simply and boldly as a man chooses his lifelong friend—people could be twice as happy."

That evening a fresh disappointment awaited her. Golyshev forwarded her the last letter he had received from Voropayev. He had not wanted to mention it to her during their conversation.

"I find life hard but cheerful," Voropayev wrote, "and so far I have no intention of exchanging my present mode of living for any other. People like me should not hide in the side lines, doing the less important jobs, it is their duty to be at the forward positions. You ask me, what sort of a life I lead. To tell you the truth, old chap, I don't know myself what is going on here. I am not living alone, a certain Elena Petrovna Zhurina, her mother, and her little girl share my four-roomed house, and we keep a cat, a dog and a pig.

"I am not quite sure myself yet whether this is just a household or a family.

"As for Alexandra Ivanovna Goreva, who once played a big part in my life,

I resolved not to burden her with myself. She deserves a happiness that I cannot give her, so I am not even going to write to her, for fear of disturbing her to no purpose.

"Even when I was young I never went in for intimacy for the sake of a passing affair; to me love is a big thing, a turning-point in life, like joining the Party, and it seemed to me that to accept a woman's life and give one's own in exchange, and to make one large life out of two small lives—was the only thing possible for me, now or any time.

"But, as you know, I don't hold with equal rights in family life. I consider that a husband should be the head of the household. There was a time when I felt I might take that position with respect to Goreva, but all that is past and done with now. A husband who needs a nurse, massage, cupping, poultices, who is pitiable, and with whom it is impossible to fall in love, without keeping an eye on his temperature chart and blood pressure—imagine this depressing picture and you will easily realize that Goreva has 'flashed past me like the Azores.'"[1]

"Well, I must say goodbye and shake your paw. Remember that if you should be disabled, there's always a bed for you beside mine as long as you live. Meanwhile, carry on and fight for me, as well.

Yours,
Alexei Voropayev."

Alexandra Ivanovna turned on the light and sat down at the table.

"It's downright freakishness," she thought to herself, as she sat, poring over the letter she had begun and shivering in the chill air of the room. "This is really intolerable nonsense!"

At that moment she felt that she neither loved nor even respected Voropayev.

"My friend," she wrote to him, "You are very cruel, and nothing, nothing can justify your cruelty. If you no longer loved me and had ceased to respect me, even then you would have had no right to renounce me in such a cowardly way.

"It isn't at all like you—as you used to be!

"It seems to me sometimes that a part of your heart has been torn away with the leg you lost. Did it never occur to you?

"Tell me, please, who Golyshev is to you, why he takes such a strangely significant place in your soul, and why you must tell him with such boyish gabbiness that I am a stranger to you? This isn't true, Alexei! You've simply forgotten what I was to you.

"Sometimes I think you must have gone crazy, and this is a little comfort to me.

"Believe me, I would have given up bothering you long ago—I have my pride, you know—if I could convince myself that you really don't care for me any more. But I know, I know for certain, that we need each other, and it is painful and bitter to think that you make me thrust myself on you. But please don't worry, I'm not going to follow you. I'm giving up the search for you now, because I know you don't like friends who force themselves on you.

A. G."

CHAPTER NINE

Never had Voropayev's life been so intense and spendthrift as at this time. Even when he was at the military academy, even at the front, he had never felt so rich, spending the great accumulated wealth of his life's experience ungrudgingly.

Nowhere else had he felt so keenly that people needed him.

He gave lectures on the history of the Party in the Party school he himself had organized there, helped the librarian to arrange readers' conferences, twice a week gave lessons to Yuri Podnebesko, who was preparing to enter a technical school. Voropayev also attended a course for gardeners at the *Novosél* collective farm—his house stood on the land belonging to this farm, and he was bold enough to argue there on the best way of obtaining two crops of potatoes a year according to the Anashin methods and two of tomatoes, according to Dergach's method.

Notices in a rather crooked handwriting, announcing that Voropayev would lecture on "The Situation at the Fronts," "The Soviet Intelligentsia in Wartime," or "The Prospects of Peace," replaced each other so swiftly that they became an accepted part of the street decorations.

[1] V. Mayakovsky.

On May 2nd and 3rd the capture of Berlin was celebrated in the town. Voropayev hardly got an hour's sleep in two days; he was hoarse and hollow-eyed, and could scarcely stand on his feet. But he knew from experience that he could go on like that for a couple of weeks. The weariness of victory is not fatal. On May 4th and 5th he was at the collective farms again, on the 6th he was on his way home in a country cart. The horses took their time. Little Stepka Ogarnov, who was driving, kept asking questions about the war, but at length, seeing that his passenger was falling asleep in the middle of a sentence, felt very disappointed. To think of it—here he was driving Voropayev himself, and no chance to find out anything about the war. It was the limit. He was ready to weep with exasperation.

As they were passing a railway foreman's house, a woman playing an accordion called out from a distance, after a good look at them:

"That's the propagandist, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is, only he's fast asleep, worn out, he seems," the driver replied shamefacedly.

"Pull up, I'll wake him in two ticks."

Voropayev was assisted down from the cart and offered a glass of milk right from the cow.

"If your voice is gone, show us by signs how Berlin was taken."

And though he knew nothing but the Supreme Commander's orders of the day, he was an able narrator, and could talk about things as long as you liked, and it would all be true.

That was what he did now, and it was late at night when at last, having promised his young driver to give him a special account of the war, he got home half dead.

Lena locked his door and told her mother and Tanya to say, if anyone enquired for him, that the colonel had not yet returned.

When he had had a proper sleep, he sat down by the radio.

The air was silent regarding the taking of Berlin. There were two lengthy accounts from the German capital sent by British newspapermen, telling of the havoc wrought by the Allies' planes and of how long Montgomery's soldiers had been awaited here; the German radio stations, which were for some reason still working muttered something very indistinct about capitulation, and passed on immediately to funeral marches interspersed with declamatory speeches about Hitler's departure from this world.

Resting his head on the radio set, Voropayev listened in to the sounds in the ether, as though Europe was mumbling her most secret thoughts or her vague hopes in a fevered sleep.

Prague was fighting. Americans were pushing on towards Austria's frontiers. The British were capturing Hitler's panic-stricken army leaders in the backyards of the war, and in prose and poetry were singing the praises of their Monty, as though Montgomery's soldiers were the only men on the battlefield.

The hypocrisy of it all did not so much insult Voropayev as evoke a feeling of disgust, but he knew too little as yet to draw any conclusions.

"Not a word from any of my old friends, and Shura has stopped writing."

If the truth were told, he was thirsting for news of her, though he kept trying to assure himself that his interest in Goreva arose solely from the fact that she was in the thick of events at which he could only make a guess.

Yet her image, once evoked, would not leave him and so to drive away the yearning melancholy that threatened to kill in him all conception of what he ought to do, he forced himself by a tremendous effort to think of something else.

The silence of an ordinary southern night flowed over the town. And through its dark tide rose now a distant call, now the echo of a song, or again the rattle of a lorry on the far highway, and at first Voropayev's ear caught nothing unexpected, until he distinguished the furious ringing of the telephone in the post office, and someone running along the road with heavy steps, panting as though from boxing. A rap at one window, then at another. Excited voices demanding: "Are you deaf or what?" "Get up, for God's sake!" and someone's shrill whistle.

Running out onto the balcony, Lena leaned over, peering into the darkness. A fragrant tress of purple wistaria trailed over her shoulder like a shawl.

"Who's there?" she called shrilly, but apparently guessing at once what it was all about, she stretched out her arms and turned to Voropayev.

"Peace!" he exclaimed. "They must have concluded peace!" He took her in his arms and kissed her hard on her parched, chapped lips—the touch of them reminded him of her work-roughened fingers. "It's peace, Lenochka!"

"Lights! Turn on the light!"

Tvorozhenkovs' house lit up and after it—the others. Sleepy-eyed children came scampering out, whistling and yelling, and brought some dry sticks into the street and built a bonfire with them.

Someone started playing the accordion. The first couple stumblingly led the dance on the dark pavement.

"Look! Look over there!"

Far out at sea the lights blazed suddenly on a big ship, and the soft moan of its siren broke the silence cautiously like the first low peal of thunder.

The girl on duty in the post office informed them breathlessly that this morning peace had been signed in Berlin, and rounded out the statement with elaborate details of her own invention.

The listeners believed every word.

Voropayev held Lena firmly by the arm: people came and threw their arms round his neck and wept for joy, gave him great smacking kisses, and he wept and kissed them, unable to utter a word from the emotion that choked him.

Someone shouted that a meeting would be held in the committee house and the news of peace was to be officially announced there—and then the whole crowd swept with one accord down to the sea, laughing, singing, dancing and shouting hurrah.

Bonfires were lighted at the *First of May* and the *Kalinin* collective farms. One very bright resinous flame like a star spilled over, flashed out far up under the sky, in a dark pocket of the mountains. Lonely Zarubin was celebrating victory with the rest of them.

"Long live Stalin!"

The bus carrying new arrivals to the sanatorium pulled up before the throng.

"Have they found Hitler?" the driver asked, but he was dragged out and tossed up into the air with such force that some nuts and bolts fell out of the pockets of his wadded jacket.

"Hang onto the air!" he was advised, and obediently he raised his arms and shouted something, apparently just grasping what had happened.

The passengers were invited to alight one by one and were tossed up, one by one, after which the crowd made the bus go to the sea with them.

Children were picked up and borne aloft by the crowd, losing their parents. Down on the shore someone fired a double-barrelled gun. Little lads ran by with sticks sputtering gunpowder flames.

Peace! What would it be like? How would it pay us for the countless sacrifices? Peace! Russia alone knew the price of this word. And perhaps at this moment no one was thinking yet of the future—all were moved by the one thought, one sensation: that the war was over, and we had avenged ourselves!

Rybalchenko emerged from somewhere: he was wearing his uniform of lieutenant-colonel of the coast defence.

"What a victory! Magnificent!" he was bellowing as if it was in battle. "The Russians have taken Berlin, beaten up all the fascists there, and been the first to win the victory!"

When the huge crowd from the *Novosel* collective farm was nearing the centre of the town, riders from the *First of May* farm and lorries from Shirokogorov's state farm came to meet it. Seamen, farmers, army men, children, everybody sang, danced and kissed each other.

Pale and excited, Korytov was vainly trying to call for order, as he stood on a desk that had been dragged here from some office. He smiled helplessly and spread his hands, his whole appearance saying as plainly as possible that it was beyond him to catch the people's attention and announce the news everyone ought to know.

Suddenly someone shouted:

"Voropayev! Where's Voropayev?"

"Come on, Voropayev! Here . . . get him shoulder high!"

He was tossed over the heads of the audience.

"The Germans have signed the act of capitulation . . ." Korytov prompted him.

But that was not the point. The people were stirred and overjoyed not by the fact that the Germans had capitulated in writing, but by the fact that *we* had won.

And this was what Voropayev started with.

"Our country has shed much of her blood, but it is only through this that the truth is gained. We have won the victory—you and I. We won it because we all fought—young and old. We wanted only one thing, and that one wish was multiplied by two hundred million hearts. We have avenged our wrongs grimly and unsparingly—and may this be a lesson to those who took arms against us.

"There is no force that can withstand Soviet force. May mankind remember this day—Socialism alone has won for all. The man of the Soviets was in the firing line. For thirty years falsehoods had been told of him. But it was he who built Socialism. They did not believe him. He undertook to beat the fascists. And this wasn't believed, either. And we wrung Hitler's neck, liberated two-thirds of Europe and now we are victors in Berlin. Is it possible that even now we won't be given our due? No, what we have done can never be kept hidden now! They can no longer slander us. From now on and forever we shall be regarded by mankind as the strongest and most just people on the face of the earth. . . Long live Stalin!"

Lena was waiting for him, her excited face upturned.

It was the first time she had heard him speak in public and she was more impressed by the powerful feeling that prompted the words than by their actual meaning.

"What's up, Lenochka? You're struck dumb all of a sudden," he called out to her, giving her arm a shake.

"I never knew," she said, "that you could do this with the people," and she shook her head. "So that's what you're like, Voropayev, eh?"

He was abashed by the open admiration in her eyes.

"It isn't that I can do anything with the people, but that the people have this effect on me," he told her. "I can't say three words properly in the privacy of an office, but when I'm with the people I'm not afraid of the devil himself. It isn't just that I feel it in my mind, it is in my body itself, in my shoulders, in my very breath, that I am the people, in the people and with the people, that I am their voice. Ah, how lucky I've been, when I come to think of it!"

CHAPTER TEN

In the middle of June 1945, Alexandra Ivanovna Goreva arrived at the Austrian castle of Waalsee on the bank of the Danube, situated somewhere beyond Krems in the neighbourhood familiar to us from the pages of *War and Peace.*

This castle belonged to the Hapsburgs. The last scion of the Austro-Hungarian imperial house, the Herzog Josef, a man of forty, going bald, with a scanty, badly dyed moustache and rather pimply face, showed Goreva over his home, explaining the arrangement of the rooms.

She had been asked to look at it and see whether it was suitable for the welcome of guests from the American army.

Our people had already been the guests of the Americans and had returned puzzled and at a loss. They had been met with a march-past, carried out with the utmost precision and rhythm to the strains of a band led by a comical virtuoso drum major, twirling his smart mace in an incredibly elaborate manner. The officers in their wide trousers folding over high boots, and, in particular, a tall dignified rather elderly general who looked like an actor and wore light chamois leather breeches, gave the impression of exquisitely dressed sportsmen rather than army men. There was something theatrical in the over-emphasized almost mechanical precision of their drill.

After the parade the Soviet army men were invited to an officers' mess where soldiers carried round trays with whisky and very small corned beef sandwiches.

That wound up the whole affair.

Now our Soviet officers had resolved to give the Americans a real Russian welcome. Supplies had been obtained of Moscow vodka, of pressed caviar—in those same round blue tins marked "Caviar Russe" that were famous all over the world—and a forty-pound roast pig. One division sent word that it was sending fresh trout, another suggested treating the Americans to steamed Uzbek dumplings filled with chopped mutton, onion and red pepper—a dish General Korolenko spoke of approvingly as: "tearing the guts out of a man like a Katyusha."

Dr. Goreva arrived at the Waalsee Castle about three days before the projected supper party.

An avenue of ancient limes led to the outer gates, and beyond these lay the bridge by which the castle itself was reached.

An old Turkish cannon overgrown with ivy stood in the gateway, a narrow bridge with battlemented walls was flung across to the rock on which the castle stood, and finally, a small inner courtyard connected the various parts of the huge palace building. Climbing roses of a delicate blush rose covered the grey masonry.

The massive staircases that had been built to last the centuries, their curiously-turned balusters, the stucco mouldings of the window frames, the leaden drain pipes, the pointed Gothic roofs with steeples reminiscent of fish bones—these were the things that struck the visitor.

Within, the castle was full of dazzling treasures, things of taste and exquisite elegance, but there was too much of everything, each valuable vied with another, lowering its worth, so that in the end attention wandered, impressions were blunted by the endless series of tapestries, bronzes, crystal, mirrors, paintings, furniture and weapons. The rarest things were apt to be overlooked in the innumerable fleeting impressions, and yet the story of many ornamental objects was the history of inter-European intrigue, friendships, tales and legends.

"Surely no one needs all this sumptuousness," Goreva said to herself, as she passed through the gilded, mirrored, silk-hung chambers.

Splendid costumes of olden times hung behind the glass doors of the cupboards. Blue and silver gem-spangled brocades, pink, green, lilac and white velvets, satin slippers with diamond buckles, satin coats with ruby buttons, elegant gilded sticks and amethyst snuff-boxes spoke of an age of sensuous delight, long since faded into the mists of legend.

Portraits of kings, emperors, popes, cardinals, marshals and diplomats, by once famous court painters, hung on the walls.

There were no paintings one could simply admire, just as there were no books one could simply read, nor a single good piano, but only spinets and harpsichords that had been mute for many a year.

"Books to read?" the Herzog asked in surprise. "Good heavens! The whole attic is full of them and there are some in my private rooms."

"Timeless thoughts, unfortunately, are contained in extremely perishable material," he added, "paper becomes worn and old in a century or so, and makes a lot of litter."

Goreva was surprised to learn that the castle had not undergone repairs and painting for about fifty years, the roof was leaking, there were big splits in the parquet, and only two toilet rooms—one of which was closed—in the whole place.

The Herzog waved his hand with a pathetic attempt at a smile.

"I can hardly make ends meet, madame. The repair and upkeep of all this revered history is utterly beyond my means, I must admit."

"But it's the history of your house. . . ."

He corrected her.

"To a much greater degree it's the history of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The destinies of Europe were decided within these walls time and again. But what am I to do? I have a large family, four grown-up daughters. You can imagine what it takes to keep them. It's no joke, madame, to have four marriageable daughters without a marriage portion these days."

"Without a marriage portion? Why, the contents of even one of these rooms would suffice for even the most exacting suitor, I should think."

The Herzog scratched his head dubiously.

"My daughters will hardly find suitable matches in Austria. As for the Americans . . ." he paused, "well, we'll see what they look like now. Before the war they often used to come and see me," he added.

One of the rooms had a balcony overhanging the Danube. The sound of its waters carried to the ear. The view was unforgettable in its sharpness of outline, its colours, its infinite poetry.

The vivid foliage of the spreading trees, trees such as Goreva had seen only in old engravings, rose over the far bank of the Danube, and on a lofty crag that was continued unbroken by the castle walls, the ivy trailed, clothing in the same rich dark green the rock and the ancient stones of the castle.

The waters of the Danube were a

tumbled, greenish-yellow. The shuttered shadows of turrets and towers flowed by.

"And couldn't you let this castle be a hotel for wealthy tourists or as sanatoriums?"

"It hasn't done—we can't trade in things that were considered the honour of the family," the Herzog replied condescendingly, with a slight gesture to indicate that it was time for them to move on into other rooms.

Antlers, horns, and the tusks of wild boar mounted on wooden tankards crowded the dark corridors.

All the crowned heads of Europe must have hunted here. Fragments of foreign banners, won at some distant time by the masters of the castle, as the labels stated, were carefully preserved in glass cabinets. The standards were many but the Herzog was in a hurry.

"History, history, only ashes are left of it," he said hastily, and did not pause before the glass case with the orders and medals received in the course of several centuries by his power-thirsty ancestors.

The parade was held next morning near the castle walls. The joint battalion of men decorated with the Order of Glory filled the narrow place d'armes, blocked on their flanks by tree stumps and shrubs, and made an impressive march-past before the stand with the American guests.

The men marched with their tommy guns at the ready so boldly and freely as if to suggest that were they ordered: "Into the Danube!" they would have rushed it as solidly as a wall, never falling out of step or slackening their splendid march.

After the parade all those who had been invited moved off to the castle. Dr. Goreva was asked to act as interpreter in case the guests showed an interest in the castle itself. She agreed because Golyshev was among the officers and she had arranged to go back with him.

Two Americans preferred to see the castle rather than go to the dinner, and were conducted through the rooms by the owner himself. One of them, a middle-aged man with the mobile face of an actor, had known the host many years ago.

"I stayed here in 1939," he reminded the Herzog, "you remember, with Phillips, who bought Napoleon's bedroom from you. He's in Europe now, too, and he would like to see you."

The Herzog spread his hands, gesticulating round with a touch of embarrassment at Goreva.

"Practically everything's gone. I'm on my uppers. All that's left is the service that belonged to Maria Theresa," he murmured insincerely.

"Complete with a certificate of its genuineness?" this in a sceptical tone from the second American, a short florid-faced major with four rows of ribbons on his chest.

"Yes, of course. That's what costs the money," the host retorted.

The major looked really astonished.

"And what about all this?" he asked, with a gesture that took in the whole salon.

"Straight out of an antique shop," the other American explained to him with a chuckle. "Don't you know you can get a perfectly good replica of the Pope himself in Vienna, old chap?"

"You wouldn't miss the chance of a good thing, Duke, I'm sure?" the brisk little major threw out casually. "How's the soap situation here? I have a soap factory. When I was in France I managed to make two or three contracts, profitable to both parties, for supplying soap. How about it? Besides this, I've become a shareholder in a soap manufacturing firm in Paris."

"Why not? Soap is currency. But without credit neither I nor anyone else can launch into business. You ought to bear this in mind."

"You'll get credits," the American who had been here in 1939 said firmly. "Philips is coming to Vienna for that very purpose."

They were going through the drawing room, looking at the pictures and the things in the glass cases.

"At the beginning of this year, Mr. Josef, I was in the Crimea in Russia," the American continued. "I had a look at the Vorontsov castle at Alupka. The Russians put up Churchill there. A beautiful place and in excellent taste. Unfortunately, the Bolsheviks don't sell palaces."

"Well, how are they getting on there?" the major asked. "Still insisting on their Socialism and all that, eh? Good fighters, I must say."

"The Bolsheviks are first-rate fellows,

but it's a hell of a job getting friendly with them. Stubborn! Yes, of course, they're still sticking to their Socialism, trust them!"

"Yes, they certainly know how to fight," the stout major repeated, "fight like devils. By the way, what's life like there?"

"The war's set them back a lot, of course, but still I think they'll rise from the ashes before you distribute your soap in Austria."

"Soap is stable currency," the major said gravely, missing the joke. "Soap, caustic soda, essential oils are sounder than any marks, kroner, francs, lei and pengo. What earthly use, if you'll excuse me for saying so, is Vienna to me if I can't find a buyer there?"

"Oh, we're still a long way from Vienna, so far only the Russians are there," said the American who looked like an actor. "I don't know what's awaiting us there."

The Herzog consoled him with:

"The Bolsheviks are all right in this way: they don't try to get the markets, like the major, with contracts."

"Is that so?" the major said with a laugh. "Don't they, eh? In France, where there wasn't a single Russian battalion, as you know, the talk was all of Russian aid. You offer them soap and they say, 'No, we'll wait a bit, maybe the Russians will give us soap!' You offer them raw rubber—stuff the Bolsheviks haven't got—and you hear the same thing: 'Oh, we'll wait a bit, maybe the Russians will help us with that.'"

The Herzog cast an anxious glance at Goreva, wondering whether she was following the conversation or not.

"I know a few very sound firms in Vienna," the major said. "Do you happen to know Alfred Franck?"

"I am sorry to have to disappoint you," the Herzog said, "he was executed."

"What for?" both Americans demanded simultaneously.

"He was a Jew."

"Oh, what nonsense! The main thing is that the capital of the firm shouldn't come under the law of nationalization, which would have happened if Franck had worked for Hitler. Had he any heirs?"

"It's hardly likely. The Gestapo was pretty thorough."

"The firm's business could not have collapsed just because of Franck's death," the major persisted. "When all's said and done, somebody must be carrying on. A well-organized business is a public concern. And what about the Grocery Company?"

"Pretty lively."

"And Zimmermann?"

"He hid and survived. There was something phony about his connections."

"That's all nonsense. A contract with an American firm will cover all earlier connections. The Bolsheviks themselves couldn't get a dig at that," the major said, cheering up. "But I like the Russians. They're certainly grand soldiers."

Evidently fearing that the major's very attractive offer might remain in the air, the Herzog said respectfully:

"I'm not asking how I can find you, Major, but I would like to tell you how it would be easiest to find me."

The major took out a visiting card.

"Well, as far as my address is concerned, I'm on wheels all the time now. But I'm as good as my word. In a week or two I'll send you someone, because it's rather awkward for me to come to see you while I'm in uniform. Could you undertake work on a commission basis?"

"Oh, yes, with pleasure," the Herzog replied. "It wouldn't be the first time."

The stout major took a fat envelope out of the pocket of his tunic.

"The price list, the terms and everything is in here. You know," he said, addressing his countryman who had visited these parts in 1939, "I adjusted myself very easily to conditions at the front: I always had a dozen prospectuses and price lists and a dozen contracts prepared. I thought it all out in Alexandria. You never know if you'll be in the same place twice. We flooded the Egyptian market with our goods under enemy gunfire, you might say. The British were mad with envy."

"Didn't Montgomery try to stop these allied activities of yours?"

"Oh, it was all over before the British guessed what we were up to. Ever been to Africa?"

"No, I never got the chance."

"That was the most interesting page in the war, take it from me. We landed with our munitions and samples, and captured a town and its market at a single swoop. Of course, in Italy we used

improved methods. 'Buy my soap and buy the best!' I used to write in Italian on the side of my tank."

The Herzog listened courteously, his sparse moustache stirring, but the major fancied that he did not believe his story.

"You're surprised?" he asked. "How naive! So, Duke, you'll find everything that interests you and myself in that envelope. Now let's go and sample the Russian vodka," he addressed his countryman.

"Yes, if our valiant colleagues have left us anything. Come along, let's try it."

They said goodbye to the Herzog, and went off to the table, leaving him with Dr. Goreva.

The roar of the Danube carried through the open window. The descendant of emperors hesitated to speak the first. At last, no longer able to keep silence, he spoke into space.

"Such is life, madame."

She made no reply and he went away, with shuffling steps as though he was polishing the parquet.

Golyshev laughed till tears streamed down his cheeks. His face was red with the wine he had drunk and his laughter made it perspire.

"There's a regular major for you!" he said, wiping his eyes. "Well done! And I don't suppose he's exaggerating a bit. He's a stout, red-faced little man with spectacles, isn't he? I know him. The commander of a tank regiment. We met about five days ago. They say he's a very good soldier, too. He took Metz. And just imagine—he does his fighting with soap!"

The driver, who was fond of joining in the conversation with his chief, remarked:

"Their drivers, too, Comrade Major—they don't let their bone go with the dog, either, I've noticed. Well, that's capitalism, and what can you do about it! They offered me some very nice things, too, now and then," he added, not without a touch of regret.

"And they have the cheek to reproach us about propaganda," Golyshev said, still laughing and wiping his hot face. "This spring I helped the Austrian peasants to plough. They had no draught cattle, the Germans had driven off all the cattle and it was getting late in the season, so I lent a hand. Well, this same major happened to be passing on his way to headquarters and he saw me and stopped. 'Are you going to get a share of the harvest or what?' he asked me. 'I don't want any share,' I said—'we do it for nothing.' Then he winked as much as to say—'We know you, you and your propaganda!' He wants to palm off his soap on the people here, but as to helping them with their land—that's politics, you see, propaganda, trying to win them over with ideas. Yes, and you'd better look out, Anton! I suppose they treated you to rum?"

"Yes, they offered me some, Comrade Major, but I didn't so much as taste it," the driver replied with dignity.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

It was an amazing autumn. It wearied with heat that knew no surcease. The trees, their boughs bending under the burden of fruit, stood motionless as though under a spell, giving off like fading flowers the heavy, steaming scent of new-mown hay warmed in the sun.

The vegetable gardens breathed their spicy intoxication. A sharp scent emanated from the very stones of the buildings.

The birds were silent, the winds dropped, a sultry daze hung over everything that lived. The scents hovered like gnats over the earth. The earth never lost its warmth until daybreak. A crimson veil hung over the horizon day and night, as though far across the sea something was burning without ever being consumed.

At night the overripe melons burst with a startling crack, and the moist mess of seed splashed out in a rich extravagance that made one think of the happy time of fruit gathering, love, weddings and the time of rest that came before winter set in.

The rich fragrant sweetness of grapes and figs pervaded the houses, and everyone went about sticky and sweet, and slightly intoxicated with the heat.

Now, when the bloom of the flowers was over, the roofs of the houses rejoiced the eye. Early pumpkins, orange and rosy, bright yellow melons, red ropes of peppers, the blood-red drops of the kizil berry drying on a canvas, the coral of rose hips piled high, and the dim dark blue of the blackberry, bunches of figs, greenish yellow, and black, and

dark brown, crumpled-looking pomegranates decorated the slopes of roofs.

From a distance the play of colour looked like the dabs on a painter's palette. But it was a rare brush that could do justice to the enchantment of abundance and beauty of tone, crowning the country cottages in autumn.

Contrary to his own express desire, Voropayev had ceased to think about settling down and putting his affairs in order when he was appointed deputy to Korytov as the Secretary of the Party district committee.

His books were still standing on the long shelves that bent beneath their weight in Sophia Ivanovna's house, in the upstairs rooms, the Podnebeskos occupied now. Sometimes he came back and spent hours looking over his notes or translating something from English.

If he was there for long, he would readily agree to stay to supper or tea but he always went back for the night to his new room in town where there was nothing but a little table and a camp bed.

These days he felt no need for a home of his own, because the whole district was his home. He arranged conferences in Chumandrin's state farm with as much satisfaction as at Tsimbal's. He did not care for assembling people in the district committee, but invited them to a fresh place on each occasion. He held some meetings of the bureau of the district committee even in the collective farm Party organizations, horrifying the instructors from the regional committee and getting the secretaries of the farm Party committees in a flurry.

At the beginning of the summer he "attacked" Tsimbal's state farm, leaving it only when he was sure that work was properly launched. The drought drove him to the upper reaches of the river, to remote mountain ravines, where the reservoirs were in construction, then to the collective farms and the schools where the people he needed were growing up. He seemed to be reaping a harvest from himself these days.

He got up in the morning at the *Novosel* farm, and he was giving a talk in the vineyards of the *First of May* or the *Mikoyan* farms at midday, the late afternoon found him at the *Third International*, the *Happy* or the *Red Army* farms. By night he was seen at the delivery shed, talking to the vintners of Chumandrin's state farm.

An unfinished book was left behind at the fishermen's cooperative, an article he had started writing—at Maria Bogdanovna's, a forgotten towel—at Tsimbal's. He lived everywhere. No one could say where he began or ended his day. He was awaited at one and the same time everywhere, and was needed everywhere.

The chairman of the district executive committee, a sly fellow from Orel, Andrei Platonovich Sukhov, was accustomed in former times to ringing up Korytov in the morning and greeting him in an unctuous, ingratiating voice:

"Good morning, Gennadi Alexandrovich. Your blessing on the day begun, your reverence. Any directives or anything of that kind?"

Now Sukhov had occasion to speak to Voropayev over the phone about twenty times a day, but asked no questions about directives; everything was clear enough without them. They would come to an agreement late at night about the next day's plans and, having settled when and where they were to be on the morrow, Voropayev and Sukhov could easily get in touch by telephone. Sometimes they drove out to meet each other in carts, lorries or jeeps, had a fifteen minutes' talk and parted for a day or longer.

The harvesting of the grapes zigzagged. The best team, Ludmila Kashkina's, which had raised high hopes, had been lagging behind for two days now, though the picking was still by selection and the peak period had not been reached.

Yuri Podnebesko, the new propagandist, who had recently returned from the courses he had been attending, decided to go to Ludmila Kashkina's lot and see what was the matter. Ogainov accompanied him.

The vineyards of the *First of May* farm covered three broad hillsides, sloping down to the sea. These were the vineyards that Voropayev had "stormed" the previous winter.

The harvest had already begun. The morning was favourable and dry, with a pleasant breeze. The women cutting the grapes wore big straw hats or caps made of vine leaves, and their white and pink blouses bobbed up and down between the rows. The deeply-serrated

leaves, touched with red and gold, framed the girls, the fairest fruits. The clusters of grapes with the bloom on them gleamed like dull drops of molten sunshine. Bees hummed anxiously around them. The air was sweet with the juice of crushed grapes.

There was an amazing play of colour in all that met the eye, but brighter and finer than anything else were the young girls. Yuri felt sorry that Natasha was not among them.

The carriers, who bore baskets and huge sieves of grapes on their heads, kept calling out to each other.

Ludmila Kashkina, a short plump well-built girl, wearing a white paper cap had put a bit of cigarette paper on her nose—it was peeling with the sun. In her pale blue sleeveless blouse and trunks that showed her limbs, burned to a deep tobacco brown, she looked like a sturdy boy. She was in high spirits, as young people are at sports' competitions, when they feel no false modesty over running about in shirts and shorts while thousands are watching them and the body can have full play and express itself in the loveliest and most unusual movements. .

Ludmila ran forward to meet Podnebesko, as though she were posing in the sun, stretching out her arms like wings and watching her own queer shadow which resembled an aeroplane. She was nineteen, was very pleased with herself and certain that she pleased everyone else.

"The claret this year should be good," Ogarnov remarked jerking his head in the direction of loosely hanging clusters of amber grapes. "This'll be a first-rate vintage."

Podnebesko nodded silently, he was not very sure of himself yet in viticulture.

"Everything has turned out well this year," he said evasively. "What's that you've got there?" he asked Ludmila. "The chairman says it's claret."

"Yes, it's claret all right, but what's the use of it?" she returned with a flash of white teeth. "It's a good thing you turned up." And she gave a tug at Yuri's belt. "I wanted to go and fetch you myself. Come and see the way we've arranged things here," and she dragged him away by the belt to the weigh scales that were standing outside the little arbour at the foot of the hill.

Her grievance was that the grapes from her lot, which were mainly muscatel, though there were other varieties as well, were all accepted by the weigher as muscatel and so the other varieties were deprived of their identity.

"Varvara Ogarnova's main sort is Pedro-Jimenez and these silly fools are branding them all—the Aleatico and the Catalonia—under the same name!"

The vineyards of the *First of May* collective farm had been formed in their time from small private vineyards, where a little of every kind was grown, and so this medley of varieties, formerly of no significance, tended to hamper the present purpose of the farm, which was to grow grapes for selected wines.

The crabbed and workworn old vintner to whom they were delivered was highly indignant and denied Ludmila's charge.

His fingers slid over the clusters of rose muscatel, light red in the shade and almost black in the sunlight, he touched the pinkish-grey Pinot-Gris with their ashen bloom, caressed the deep purple Mallebec and the thick-skinned blackish-blue Cabernet that suggested a dark rosary gathered up in the hand. He smiled fondly as he looked at them and did not want to part with them, he was sorry they were to leave him.

"I've been dealing with grapes for forty-five years," he said as though pleading with them to excuse him. "It's a wise plant, I can tell you—it only lacks the power of speech."

He shot a cautious glance in Podnebesko's direction to see if he was laughing at him. But, no, Podnebesko was listening to him attentively.

The question called for prompt decision, however. Yuri did not know what measures to take, so he decided to go and see Shirokogorov. According to the laws laid down by Voropayev, the fact that when all was said and done, he was only the propagandist, did not absolve him from responsibility for the confusion he had witnessed.

He did not find Shirokogorov at his place, however. He had received a telegram from Voropayev, asking him to go to the *Mikoyan* collective farm. Three days previously Gorodtsov had kicked up a row in the district land department, declaring that the staff did nothing to earn their wages; yesterday he had

847

accused the local agronomist of retrogressive ideas.

The *Mikoyan* collective farm lay in a deep basin-like valley, a warm, sheltered spot. The most delicate varieties of grapes and the best tobacco could be grown here but still the management of the farm had not come to the fore as regards the selection of cultures. The tobacco grown was in the main the American, not the Dubeque kind, and there were many cheap varieties among the grapes.

The lots attached to the houses here were so small that there wasn't room to swing a cat, or for a calf to wipe the dust off her nozzle, as the local people put it, and so a large area that had been prepared and ought by right to have been a vineyard was cultivated as vegetable gardens. The poultry farm organized and carried on through the efforts of elderly collective farm women was a hindrance to those who tended the frames.

Gorodtsov, a restless fellow by nature, had conceived the idea of "stirring up" the whole farm organization and he demonstrated to the meeting the plan for its reorganization. He left only nine out of sixteen kinds of grapes, the chief of them being Muscatels and Tokays. The rest he uprooted unsparingly: from the New Year on, American tobacco was to be replaced by Dubeque, the vegetable gardens were to be done away with altogether and the area planted with roses from which attar could be distilled; the poultry farm was also to be broken up. The district land office considered Gorodtsov's proposals an unsound deviation to the left, far too revolutionary, and forbade the reorganization. Gorodtsov rushed into the counter-attack and called all the land office people bletherskates, trying to ensure themselves against every risk.

Shirokogorov was informed of the whole thing the first fifteen minutes of his arrival at the collective farm, as he sat with his friend on the flat roof of Gorodtsov's house, which stood as a command post should, overlooking the village.

"Look, though!" Gorodtsov explained in an artilleryman's stentorian tones, as he surveyed the valley from the roof. "Look! Fowls have to be kept where they belong! You can keep hens here, and geese there, and turkeys, too, for that matter. Each kind has its own geography. Our geography requires that we should keep away from hens. They don't amount to much around here."

"Fresh eggs, though, it's lovely to have fresh eggs," Shirokogorov ventured. "Particularly as we haven't many cows yet, and there's nowhere to keep pigs. What is a farmer to do without hens? He's got to eat. And, of course, the farmers can't do without the gardens."

"Well, this is my 'official TASS denial'," said Gorodtsov, who was fond of formal turns of speech and a parliamentary style. "One kind of garden gets in another's way, doesn't it? Tomatoes? Vegetable marrows and the like? This isn't Orel, my dear folks, this isn't Ryazan, so far as I know. This is what's called the South, the subtropical zone. Then give me the plants suitable to the South. Potatoes aren't my line, judging from the scientific data on the question."

Accustomed in his army days to blowing up houses by the hundred and throwing up bridges, Gorodtsov had an easy familiar way with expressions like "rooting out", "ploughing over", "replanting". He thought in bursts and explosions. The planting of the land with vines after blowing up the ground first appealed to him immensely—here was a job after his own heart. He would like to have blown up everything old, outworn, unnecessary—the wretched gardens, the hens, the cheap varieties of grapes—and plant the whole place with the most up-to-date cultures, achieve all-round prosperity, which was quite possible, if one took the things in hand properly.

He did not want to take his time about it. Delays were dangerous, he knew that.

"I'm not the kind to wait for God's help," he boomed, smoothing down his stiff moustache. "I'm a God unto myself according to scientific data. Tobacco, grapes and roses—and in three years' time I'll be putting a million rubles in the bank. The team leaders would be putting in forty thousand for tobacco alone, and for roses—twenty apiece. Hens just don't come into it. As soon as I have delivered the rose petals—I'll get all the geese I want."

Objections rebounded off him as though he had a charm against them, and in the end Shirokogorov was obliged to

look into his plan for the reconstruction of the vineyards.

It had been thoroughly worked out; Tokays and Muscatels were substituted by means of layers for the Saperavi, Riesling and Cabernet. The cottages hereabouts would be beautified with climbing vines, and each would have its rose garden. One of the narrow gullies nearby could be dammed to make a reservoir.

"Well, of course, if..." and Gorodtsov drew in his breath with such force that the grey fluff on the top of Shirokogorov's head was wafted like smoke towards the speaker, "... if you go against me, then I'll just have to go for it—point-blank. I want to have my own five-year plan, you can't refuse me. I want the *Mikoyan* to be a Red Banner collective farm. There's a Red Banner Song and Dance Ensemble, but for some reason or other we haven't any Red Banner collective farms. There ought to be. What? There ought to be, I say. How does it happen there aren't. I'm asking you?" he was becoming more and more excited, though Shirokogorov was not contradicting him.

"The things we did at the front! Invisible targets—we had to deal with them. Sometimes we got no sleep, worrying our heads over them. And here I am, like a kind of lizard, honest to God!—they don't give one a chance to look very far. I'm telling you straight—my communiqué doesn't agree with yours. Produce the goods, that's all I want."

"But I'm not raising any objections," the old man said with a smile. "I'd like to change the whole thing from top to bottom myself. You're right, there's no doubt about it, but don't you think you're in too much of a hurry?"

"Some go at a trot, some at a gallop. Each on the basis of how he is made. Things go better that way."

When Shirokogorov returned home and told Yuri, grumbling, about Gorodtsov's new notions, the young fellow was vexed at first that he had not been there to hear what they said. Voropayev despised nothing so much in his colleagues as not keeping abreast of things, and he always insisted that they should go out to meet events and not stay at home to wait for them.

"Your business is to know the mood of the people before they know it themselves," he said.

Yuri was late; events came rolling up to him like an unexploded bomb.

"I think I'll just run over to Gorodtsov's, get an idea of his plans, and then I can prepare my views on them for the district committee."

But Shirokogorov persuaded him not to go, as he himself had already got a fair idea of the whole thing.

"Gorodtsov has overdone it—in fact he's gone a lot too far. Of course, I understand why: he's in a hurry to live."

"But is there a grain of truth hidden away in his plans?"

"Yes, there is, but .... is he right? Of course, theoretically speaking he is right. But, speaking from the practical standpoint, he's a lefty. And this is censured. We're fighting for vegetable gardens and here he goes... No, of course, he isn't right."

Yuri felt awkward and could not look at Shirokogorov.

"But surely, if a thing is good in general, it can't be bad in particular," he objected timidly, hesitating to argue with so high an authority as this old man. "There are two questions here: one, his going too far against the vegetable gardens, and the other—his idea of the model collective farm. This, I think, is a good idea. Then the question is, can the *Mikoyan* be a model farm? Let's consider that, Sergei Constantinovich."

The old man's brows drew together and he shook his head.

"Yes, that's all right. That's all very well—the idea's right," he said. "In the abstract. But in practice it's the very devil of a job to carry out. Isn't it? What do you think?"

"It'd be hard but we've got to think about it sometime. Of course, we ought to stand out for the hens. And the gardens, as well. Folks here don't get very good food. On the other hand, it's time we were specializing in raising the valuable kinds of grapes."

"This Gorodtsov is no fool," Shirokogorov remarked with a smile in his child-like blue eyes. "The *Mikoyan* farm is in the best situation in the district, by the way. He knows a thing or two, this fellow."

"No wonder the peasants nicknamed him 'the scorpion'," Podnebesko said. "He's greedy, envious, and only smiles when he's about to say something nasty.

The Party secretary told me that when Gorodtsov went bathing in the sea for the first time, he laughed out loud with satisfaction. 'This is the right stuff,' he says, 'refreshing, too! I must make a note of this factor.'"

"He hasn't introduced sea bathing into the schedule for the benefit of the cause yet, has he?"

"No, but he will. And yet, you know, folks like him."

"I should think they would! It's all through him that the collective farm came out on top and he won all the prizes for it, and honours and commendation for everyone... Well, so should we support the idea? As a matter of fact, it's an old idea of mine, but he burst in and grabbed it, the devil—and there's nothing to be done about it. Snatched it from under my nose—and he's right. That's life! And you," he snapped his fingers, "you had the guts to teach me a lesson. 'Happy the land that welcomes such a man,' he declaimed like an actor, 'ungrateful—the land that casts him aside, miserable—the land that loses him.'"

"Where's that from?"

"Cicero."

"I must admit I know nothing about him."

"That's why I chose the quotation—so that I could teach you something you didn't know."

Yuri turned red and, embarrassed by the implied praise he had received, hurried away to see Voropayev.

Lena's life continued in its old course. Now she had no desire to change it, and break with the people she knew. On the contrary, she tried to bind herself closer to them by ties that could not be loosened in the future. Voropayev had taught her to think of a great many things and to exert herself to obtain things by her own efforts. She was full of vague hopes, just as he had been when he arrived here, worn with wounds and sickness, homeless, bewildered, but impelled by such a passion for life, that he flung himself at the obstacles in his path as soon as they came in sight.

At daybreak an old lorry lately returned from the wars drove up to Lena's house. Anya Stupina, Boris Levitsky and Kostya Zaitsev, who worked in the district committee of the Komsomol, came in it. Sophia Ivanovna handed in a big basket of buns, cucumbers, and tomatoes. Natasha Podnebesko and her baby Irochka were given a place beside the driver. Yuri came out to see them off and stood smiling at his wife and baby as if he was delighted to be left at home.

Though it was a holiday, the fields of the *Novosel* collective farm were full of people. Many of the teams were working nights as well, or part of the nights, and here and there little shelters of maize straw had been set up. Lena, who had been laid up until the day before with a bad attack of grippe, felt rather ashamed that she was not out with her team. From time to time she waved her hand and tried to show by gestures the reason why she could not join them.

Beyond the fields of the collective farms lay those of the sanatoria and the various town enterprises, then higher up the pastures, and away to the right of them the white houses of Tsimbal's state farm dotted the sides of the ravine between two mountains.

The mountain slopes with their clumps of bent and gnarled pines on the jutting ledges of rock, their clearings and deep gullies, overgrown with thorn bushes and stunted oak, looked altogether different at this level.

There was not one continuous line in the contour of the hills, everything seemed to be in movement and might differ from day to day.

A strip of coast opened on the right. The wavy blue lapped the shore. A grey vessel was lying in Happy Bay, and the fishing boats were gliding out in a semicircle, evidently casting their nets.

Pointing to the bay, Boris Levitsky observed:

"If some other Voropayev wants to rent a little house there in three years' time, he'll have to put his name down on the waiting list. Every site will be built up and occupied."

"What—as far out as this?" Lena said doubtfully.

"It's not so very far. And it's a lovely spot. Last Sunday Voropayev arranged an excursion there—on business. He invited engineers, doctors, economists, some people from Moscow, and they wandered about the rocks and the shore for nearly four hours, and then almost quarrelled when it came to the division of the lots for building sites."

"So hurry up, Anya, or you'll miss something," Zaitsev said. "By the time you're an agronomist, Tsimbal will have cultivated the whole place and there'll be nothing for you to do."

"Anya an agronomist? Are you thinking of going away to study, Anya?" Lena asked her with a note of envy in her voice.

"I don't know myself yet whether I'm going or not. I can't believe it."

Lena knew nothing of the fact that Tsimbal, who had been deputed to organize the olive gardens of the *Pioneer* state farm, had got to work with a will and secured the right to keep a group of young people on practice work. His intention was that they should subsequently obtain a college education at the cost of the farm. A formal offer of this kind was made to Anya Stupina.

The Komsomols made a joke of it; they were going to see Anya married to the state farm, they said, and Zaitsev tried to show her what a tough family life she would have.

"You know how it was, Gorodtsov proposed to her first, but Tsimbal cut in, and Voropayev, being her godfather, was all for the second candidate," Levitsky explained, never alluding to the fact that he himself had taken part in the struggle for Tsimbal's interests.

The new state farm was the Komsomols' own pet idea. A patchwork affair of waste and neglected lands on the hill slopes near the road and the sides of the unpopulated ravines, it looked a chapter out of an absorbing novel. It had been suggested by Stalin and everyone wanted to have a hand in writing that chapter as soon as possible. Zaitsev was going to work for Tsimbal, and Levitsky—for Shirokogorov.

"Heavens, I seem to be the only one left behind," Lena said, with such an unnatural smile that they all realized how dismal she felt at the thought.

Zaitsev made an attempt to console her.

"I say, want us to fix you up there—today? You do? Give me your hand. Tsimbal's the kind who thinks—the more the merrier. He never has enough folks. Honestly, he'll rope us all in before two years are over."

"Do fix me up there," Lena begged him, holding out her hand. "I'm only afraid that Mamma's got in before me, though—there's something very suspicious about her being such friends with Opanas Ivanovich. And she keeps so close about it."

"So the old man's roped in Sophia Ivanovna, too. That's certain."

"That Tsimbal will stop at nothing," Levitsky said. "He all but got round Korytov himself to come and be his assistant."

The talk turned on Korytov. They had gone through some hard times together, and, though his passion for papers, instructions and meetings was rather a bore, still they felt sorry for him in a way. He was an honest man, only he was unable either to keep abreast of life or to realize his failure to do so.

"Where is he going now? "Anya asked.

"He's going to Moscow to study," Levitsky replied.

"Everyone's going, every single person seems to be going, I'm the only one who isn't . . ." Lena could not finish the sentence.

Opanas Ivanovich was coming to meet the guests with his shepherd's crook in his hand.

The guests climbed the path to the white house, the premises of the management of the *Pioneer* state farm, where Tsimbal was living at present.

The employees were assembled around a table covered with a red cloth and set under the shade of an old spreading pine. The plan of the farm lands was laid out on the table.

"Three days ago we got permission to accept your application, Comrade Stupina," Tsimbal began in a business-like tone, as he opened the meeting. "We have an expert at the present time but what we need is some young blood of our own. That's the thing," he said, laying his hand down heavily on the paper before him. "As soon as you've finished the ten-year school, you're going to get a college education at our expense. What do we require? The things that we require are to be found devil knows where! Look here, this is it. Fifty hectares of olives, forty hectares of figs and then the hothouses. Got that? Now take the pear and apple orchards in the woods. By the time you've passed your examinations, we'll have finished the planting, we'll have the water supply fixed up, and we'll be ready for the scientific farming."

He stretched out his arms, as though

entrusting the mountain slopes to her care. Anya looked at him through narrowed eyelids, as if the sun shone through his words and dazzled her.

"It's all yours. I'm giving you this plan to remember me by. Learn all you can and come back a good manager. Come now!" and he kissed the girl three times. She was touched to the point of tears.

"Thank you for being so good to me," she said softly. "And thank you all, comrades, thank you more than I can say... But I will say this—you'll never need to be ashamed of me. Never."

Opanas Tsimbal was deeply moved. He kissed her once again.

"We are marrying her off, in a sense, to your state farm," Levitsky said, "and we are asking you to love and cherish her, while we, Komsomols, will help her all we can for our part."

"Oh, if it comes to giving her in marriage, then there's a special ceremony that has to be gone through!" Tsimbal cried. "Here, boys, get me some string and bread, salt and pepper."

The things were produced at once and the old man, grunting a bit, knelt down and tied the string round the table legs. There was general laughter.

"That's what we used to do in the Kuban in the old times. It meant that the young couple should get on well together, and their interests would be joined, so to speak."

Then, breaking off a small piece of the bread, he rolled the soft part in salt and pepper, and, with great solemnity, put it in Anya's right palm.

"I turn to you with bread and salt, and you turn to me with your whole soul, I turn to you with pepper and you to me with a heart as hot as pepper," and he made her sit down beside him at the table.

"Science, my girl, has to be held tight. You remember what Ivan Zakharovich, the gardener, told us?—What Comrade Stalin told him. You remember? Well, my girl, I consider that a scholar should be trained up from childhood. Music and singing and all those kind of things are taught from childhood. Only the scientist starts his training at the age of twenty or twenty-five. This isn't right, I think."

And, forgetting that the table was being laid, he started to tell her of his plans for the future: he was going to found a school for young gardeners, and afterwards he would send them to college so that local scientists would be trained in the state farms and agricultural cooperatives.

Almost imperceptibly autumn passed into winter. The evenings somehow reminded one of spring, they lasted so long and were so full of enchantment that even those who never paid any attention to nature involuntarily felt their spell.

It was on one of these marvellous days, so holiday-like, that a meeting of the leading Party members in the district was called. The results of the year were being summed up, the value of people and affairs was ascertained and determined. Among those everybody knew were many newcomers. They behaved with the ease of old inhabitants, only they did not push themselves forward socially though there was wit and team spirit in what they said. It was long since such a noisy, lively and fruitful meeting had taken place.

The heat of war victories was still smouldering in them. It disturbed their souls with daring searches. They were all dissatisfied with each other: Tsimbal demanded that attention should be paid to his waste land, Gorodtsov, repenting of his extremist deviations, insisted that model collective farms were needed, while ex-captain Serdiuk of the Guards, who had been removed from his job three times in these months, assured them that he was the only one of them all who thought of the morrow of the district, and was unfortunately misunderstood.

It had been a terribly hard year, and now they had won through, the people were delighted. But their joy was expressed, as so often happens here, in bitter regrets over what had not been done. Every speaker assured the meeting that he could still have achieved a thing or two more if it had not been for his neighbour.

Voropayev, who as a rule liked to fan the flames of passion, now had to pacify the meeting from time to time. That is how it sometimes happens when a battle is being analyzed; it looks as if a failure were being investigated instead of an outstanding success.

The meeting had started in the morning and only ended towards the evening.

At the meeting Dr. Komkov had arranged with Gorodtsov that the latter would drive him home on a cart from the *Mikoyan* farm, but when he came out of the Culture House and turned the corner where the stableman was to wait for him, he found that Gorodtsov had asked the man to give a lift to Yuri Podnebesko as well as to two team leaders. It was clear that there was no room for everybody, so he had to walk.

Komkov took up his stand at a corner from which he could see all the cars, carts and traps coming along the road, in the hope of getting a lift from someone he knew.

Almost immediately Tsimbal came up and buttonholing him sketched out his plans for growing medicinal plants that had been occupying his mind lately. The doctor, who was only too glad to talk and hear about the latest things, plunged into the discussion, although he could see that the last of the cars were driving past.

"What did you think of the way Voropayev's wound up? Pretty good, wasn't it?" Tsimbal asked, and so, clutching each other by the arm, they talked for a while on the subject of Voropayev.

"His talk was interesting enough but he looks bad," Komkov said, watching the road over Tsimbal's shoulder.

"We tried to persuade him to take a rest," Tsimbal assured him, "and he only shook his fist at us. 'I'm like a fish out of water when I'm resting!' he said."

At last they parted. Tsimbal turned into the Culture House, and Komkov who had to visit the sick chairman of the *Novosel* farm, walked on till he came to the point where the lane joined the highway.

The road wound upwards into the hills. After passing the last few houses it turned abruptly westward and with many narrow loops continued its tortuous way along the edge of a damp and narrow ravine near the crest.

Darkness had descended on the houses at the foot of the mountain, and the streets were grey spots, lit by an occasional orange glimmer, but out on the road and above, it was still light, and the ridge of the mountain was still bathed in a pink radiance of the last rays of the sun, now invisible behind the ridge.

The figure of a woman, climbing slowly and resembling a dark cypress at first, lightened, took shape and became familiar to the smallest detail. It was, in fact, curious that the details of her clothes were so distinct in the evening light, and that one could guess at the whole appearance and manner of the woman, so far ahead.

Before Komkov actually recognized Lena, he guessed that it was she.

No one else could harmonize swiftness of individual movements with a general leisureliness as Lena could. She always seemed to be "hastening slowly." Komkov called out to her, and turning slightly, startled at first by his shout, she recognized him and beckoned to him to catch up.

"Why are you walking home instead of getting a lift?" he asked when he came level.

"I can't stand any more noise. And, as you know, I'm fond of walking."

Yes, he knew that very well. Last spring she had tramped the distance between the *Kalinin* farm and the town—twenty-five kilometres—nearly every other day to bring four or five apples and a cheese cake to Voropayev.

They walked on in silence most of the time. Then, when they felt that they wanted to talk of the same thing and that, hard as it was, they must find an opening for the conversation, Lena halted and looked at the doctor expectantly.

"Are they shouting to us?" she asked indifferently.

From the district centre down below rowdy voices came in a wave—it was either someone singing at the top of his voice or calling to people.

As the two stood listening, they involuntarily admired the view of the broad mountain valley far below. Criss-crossed with orchards and vineyards, it was open to their eyes, looking as though one might pick up the whole thing by the edges and carry it away.

"No, they're not calling to us," Komkov replied. He was getting ready to speak of a subject that alarmed them both and so he stood, turning over in his mind the day's impressions like a hastily-filled notebook, searching fruitlessly for a good opening.

Lena waited patiently, with only one thing before her mind's eye—Voropayev's worn and weary face in the presidium.

He had spoken well, particularly well today, and even those he had ridiculed or found fault with had no grievance against him. He spoke as a doctor might speak to a patient who has not carried out his instructions. He threatened but promised to help.

When he had done with the year's work, Voropayev spoke of culture.

"Culture is a desire for beauty," he said. "It is the cultivation in one's self of a taste for the things of the mind, and it is a great pity we do not all think of this and that many of us even consider that someone else will chew this culture for us and feed it to us when we happen to want it. We are far to busy, we say, to bother about such things, but we're quite willing that you, our instructors, should amuse and interest and teach us. If you go on like that, eventually you'll come to the stage when you expect the state to shave you, take you to the baths, the tailor, and shoemaker."

He was standing in the middle of the platform. His tunic was by no means new, but it was pressed, and so were his breeches. His boots were polished. These were his ordinary clothes that he wore every day but he looked very smart and nice in them now.

"I keep thinking of Voropayev's speech," Komkov said suddenly, without any preliminaries. "He didn't say anything trite, none of those tiresome platitudes. And you'll see that people will remember his words for a long time."

Lena, who had been expecting this first insignificant phrase for some time, asked directly:

"What do you think of his health?"

"Well, you see, it's like this. . . "

"Tell me straight out. . . . "

"Voropayev is a man at the service of all. Very highly organized. There is no cure, no medicine for people like that. Their illnesses are different from everyone else's."

"He's got so thin."

"Thin? Yes, he's all skin and bone. Even his heart."

"Oh, no!" Lena exclaimed, moving on. "You said last winter that a change of life was the best medicine for him. Now there you are—he's had the change," she said softly.

"But not enough of a change. He needs a bit of joy in that life of his. Do you want me to show you something very unusual?" he said, changing the conversation abruptly, and beckoning her to follow him. "Things are not the same in life as they are in human relationships—there is not so much triviality. Come along, it's not far from here."

They turned off from the road, ran down the steep hillside track, rounded a crag and stood still.

The ground broke off sheer, like the wing of a plane. They were standing on the edge of a broad ledge of rock like a table. Two tall pines — Wellingtonias— overhung the precipice, ready to tear themselves up by the roots it seemed, and take flight.

"Why, it's the Eagle Peak!" Lena exclaimed. "I've often looked up at this ledge from below. It makes you think of an eagle's eyrie. But I never imagined it was so beautiful up here. Nature can make places you'd never dream of!"

"But this isn't all nature. Man helped to make it," Komkov told her.

"You don't say so? But who was it?"

"I don't know. All I know is that the traces of some strong and vital life are plain here. In the first place—look at those Wellingtonias: they're only to be found in fine parks hereabouts, they wouldn't grow here of themselves. No, without man's hands and very able hands at that—this place couldn't have been made what it is."

"You think so?"

"I've no doubt about it. See how symmetrically the trees grow either side of the cleft. The idea must have been to make a stairway here."

Lena knelt down, scrutinizing the cleft critically. A bright new moon illumined the rock.

"Yes," she said as she rose to her feet, "you're quite right. I somehow think that cleft was made by human hands, too! It looks too clean-done."

"And just look here," Komkov said, growing keener about his find, "see that buttress of squared stone. What do you say to that? It's definitely not the work of nature."

"But where did the house stand?"

Lena said, looking about her anxiously, engrossed now in a discovery of something out of the ordinary. "Was there ever a house here?"

"No, that's just it, there wasn't. You needn't look for it. Neither a house nor its foundations are to be found. But just imagine, there is a water main," he exclaimed as, groping under the tree roots, he picked up the fragment of an earthenware pipe.

"This must have been laid under the mountain. I suspect that while they were building the highway, they destroyed the whole system, for the water doesn't reach this place now. But what immense labour it must have meant, what energy must have gone into it!"

Lena wondered if the age of the potsherd could be determined.

"It must be over fifty years old," Komkov said, and pointing to the giant Wellingtonias, added: "These youngsters must be at least octogenarians, so the water main can't be any younger, and is probably older."

"Maybe someone did live here two hundred years ago. It's almost worth writing to the papers about."

"I don't know, I haven't the slightest idea who it could be," Komkov said, evidently at a loss. "But it must have been someone who understood beauty as a necessity. He climbed the crag, stood amazed by the view and said to himself: 'I'll prepare this spot for those who are to come after me.' And he started the job, planted trees, brought water, thought of cutting a staircase in the rock, and built this buttress. . . ."

Lena interrupted him:

"But why didn't he build his house here?"

"Why? Well, that's very simple. In those days dwelling up here must have been out of the question, and he knew beforehand that he would never live to see the day when a road would be built, and when one need no longer weary oneself out, but just enjoy the beauty of the place. As I understand him, he realized that he was not building for himself. He simply left a signpost for future generations — so that they might turn their attention to it. It was like a challenge to us: carry on, finish the task that I began, and live your life here—and through that he linked his life with ours. . . ."

"You didn't ask the old people hereabouts anything about it?"

"Yes, I did. In their memory no one ever lived or intended to live on this spot. No one's name is associated with it, in any way."

They paced up and down a few moments.

"There are some bushes!"

"Those are mine." Komkov said. "I planted them. They're pomegranate and olives. I wanted to contribute my share to the disinterested efforts of that nameless builder, and advance life at least another step towards his goal. Perhaps in twenty years' time we may not recognize these crags. Some splendid sanatorium or memorial will be erected here, visible from afar. The story of the pioneer will be forgotten, of course, and it will be said that the idea of the building arose of itself." Komkov spoke of the pioneer as though he was an intimate friend. "There are such people in the world, Lenochka. Michurin is one of them, others are going out like Dezhnev to discover new lands. Then there are those who become Lomonosovs, and still others who though they never leave their native places, never make discoveries, or travel to distant parts, bring life to the bare rocks and make them habitable for their children and grandchildren. I forgot to say that this pioneer had to bring soil here, and planted vines. Now the vines have run wild and bear no fruit, but they resemble the old original native variety, the descendant, perhaps, of those that were brought here by the contemporaries of Homer."

"Maybe he—the pioneer—was himself an ancient?" Lena said.

"Oh, no, this must have been a Russian. No one had ever seen Wellingtonias before the Russians. Our great grandfathers planted them here. And then, the whole idea of the place, the very nature of the thing is Russian, done with dash and defiance, as much as to say: here, my dear descendants who are to come after me, here is what I found and got ready for you, this is my gift to you, rejoice in it and be thankful."

"It would be a good idea to take this crag under our special care," Lena said thoughtfully.

"Yes, of course. But I would like you to give another thought to the builder. He must have been very like our

Voropayev, I imagine. Don't you agree? He discovered this crag and marked it out, he provided us with a strange and wonderful riddle, and yet he never built a house or even a shack for himself."

"But what is it that he seeks, Doctor? Tell me, at least in confidence, what is it that he needs?" Lena pleaded, thinking of Voropayev.

"As I have told you already, Voropayev needs a little joy. . . But of course, I don't really know. I'm inexperienced and I don't know how to deal with such natures yet. To my mind, he should have died twice by now, and yet he's still alive."

Lena sighed and took the doctor's arm.

"Come away from here, let's go home, it's getting quite dark."

Night had descended over the mountains by now. The air was fresh and damp. Sounds were muffled as though they had been wrapped in something soft and downy. The moonlight, vague and misty up above, had the sheen of metal down below. All was still and shining.

In a low tone Komkov said:

"Once I read a very profound thought in Turgenev's *Faust*—who knows how much seed is left by each who lives on earth 'to sprout only after his death?' When you and I die, Lenochka, we won't leave behind us either this rock or those pines, or even some poor attempt at a water main, and I feel envious of that nameless ancestor. . . ."

"You mean we won't leave anything?" Lena repeated in an indignant tone. "We'll leave people such as have never been seen before. Happiness will follow in our wake."

After that they were silent for a long while. The night was still and did not disturb their thoughts, and they fancied that at this hour the sleepers must have long, pleasant dreams, and those who were awake wished with such a passion of desire that their thoughts were almost tangible, like these silver-black leaves that shone out, one after another, as the two people walked out from the shade of the mountain slope.

Enchanted by the beauty of the sad night, Lena was thinking how long, how endlessly long, human life actually was. This lifeless rock itself had been someone's life. The stream, flowing drowsily by, might also bear the trace of a life, for its bed had been hollowed by a stubborn, persistent spade. The bridge they had just crossed signified a man's immortality. And then this road, these pines, the fountain at the roadside—all were fractions of human lives, and if a magician had the power to reanimate the silence of the years—everything around would speak out and sing with a mighty voice! "I dig a watercourse in the bare mountains!" the river would sing. "I lay a path through impassable woods!" the voice of the road would say. "I plant the first pine on the slope of an unsheltered hill, and may there be woods and cool shade for those who come after me," the grove would whisper. For thousands of years people live upon the earth, and the earth has felt the strength and vital force of innumerable hands. Who shall say that the ravine whence a damp breeze blows was made by the action of mountain streams, without the aid of man? Who shall guess how many generations have left their bones and blood among the stones in the earth?

And Lena thought it would be a happiness to be a clod of earth, a corner of an ancient stone, a stream by the roadside, that she might live even after the body was no more.

When everyone would have forgotten that Lena Zhurina ever existed—the spring she had pierced in the rock would not dry up, the path she had made would not be overgrown with thorn bushes, her grove would flourish on the mountain slopes, attracting the birds and beasts to its shade, and some day another woman would remember with tender affection and envy her nameless predecessor, as she went down the path on just such a night as this.

It saddened her to think that she would never be able to convey to others all that filled her soul, now grown deeper and more mature.

CHAPTER TWELVE

At the beginning of February, a tall handsome woman wearing a leather coat with the marks of shoulder straps still visible, boarded almost at the moment of departure a steamer leaving a port in the Caucasus. She carried a light valise, as though her decision to make the

956

journey had been sudden. A heavy nor'easter had been blowing for nearly two days, the passage was rough and passengers were few.

After locating her berth, the woman went up on deck, where she was almost swept off her feet by the gale, and made haste to go below. The air was full of fine gravel as it whirled and howled about her. It was almost impossible to breathe, no one could inhale such air, the gravel stuck in the throat and threatened to choke her.

Once back in her cabin she took off her leather coat and remained in a well-tailored dark green costume with two rows of medal ribbons on the breast; she picked up a book and went into the saloon. The people there greeted her pleasantly, passed a smiling remark or two about her courage in attempting such a stormy passage alone. She replied in a rather reserved tone that she was going on urgent business, then, choosing the armchair nearest the radiator, sat down and began to read. She did not glance back at the shore as the steamer put out, nor did the first high waves that beat against the side, sending a quiver through it, arouse her from her reverie.

Fellow-travellers soon become acquainted. Before an hour had passed, many knew each other by name, talked of the storm, sea sickness, remedies for it, the meals on the steamer, thought of games they could play, listened to the radio and expressed their opinions on international affairs.

The woman in green did none of these things. Her beautiful but weary face wore an expression of vexation. She was obviously afraid that her solitude would be disturbed. And so it was very soon. First a brisk and extremely sociable major, then a long, lanky forester from Sukhumi, travelling with his little girl, sat down beside her and drew her into the conversation.

It was not very long before they had learned that she was a demobilized army doctor who had been in a sanatorium and was now going to visit a patient whom she had not seen for a long time.

"You've certainly had some luck with the weather!" the major said, laughing, and the forester chimed in sympathetically:

"You should have waited till the storm was over, the next cruise might be beautiful."

She agreed meekly that it might have been better to wait. A few minutes later her companions were addressing her by her name.

"Yes, you were in too much of a hurry, Alexandra Ivanovna," the forester repeated, happily unaware that he was probing a wound with his talk. "Now Vetka and I—" (his little girl was called Elizaveta, Vetka for short) "now Vetka and I had to go, we couldn't put it off." At this point he went into explanations; his old friend, Tsimbal, had made him a very attractive offer and so they were going to spy out the land.

"It reminds me of that wonderful saying—praise be to him who can grow two ears of grain where one grew before—at least, I think it goes like that but I've forgotten. Anyway, I'm going to plant oaks and cedars."

There seemed to be nothing that suggested creative ability about this man. His tall, lanky, lean frame was that of a nomad, a land loper, and it meant that people of this type had too heard the call of the soil, and had set out from their old haunts to seek a place where they might plant the seed of their still unfaded hopes and inclinations.

The major was travelling via Odessa to Lvov. He had lost his family, was fancy-free and did not feel drawn to any particular place, except the former battlefields. He was in the reserves, and had resolved to settle in a spot that held some of the purest and noblest of his associations and reminiscences—a village in the Carpathian foothills where he was known and remembered as a liberator. Here, he thought, he could rebuild the life that had been maimed in the war.

Two women passengers, mother and daughter-in-law, were going to join the son of the one and husband of the other in the Ukraine, where he had remained to work after recovering from wounds.

Two families of Baku workers were going to settle in Kaliningrad.

The whirlwind of roving that swept the country steered the people to happy havens, where they found new work and homes.

"And I, too, have to look for my place in life, where I shall grow like the ear of grain the forester talked about," Alexandra Ivanovna thought wistfully.

"And yet, who knows... Someone said very aptly that happiness is a by-product like coke, you get it while you're striving for something quite different."

In the evening, when darkness had shut out the view of the sea, and the surge of the waves grew more powerful, the passengers went down to their cabins and only Dr. Alexandra Goreva, the forester and his daughter and two Caucasians remained in the saloon. The melancholy of a stormy night was easier to bear here.

The Caucasians had been drinking wine, singing and embracing each other since morning. They had begun drinking and singing straight after breakfast and kept it up until late in the evening, indifferent to everything save their endless song. They did not seem able to manage the song very well, either it had no end or they could not find it.

About midnight the steamer was once or twice tossed so violently that the doors of some of the cabins flew open, the children woke up and cried, the voices of the sailors carried from the deck and the lamps were turned on again in the bar, which had been in semi-darkness.

Alexandra Ivanovna still sat motionless.

The strange journey against which her intellect had rebelled, which had been so much against her pride, was drawing to an end. When she saw the name of the town in which Voropayev was living printed in a timetable she could no longer contain herself, left the sanatorium before her time was up, and set out without informing him that she was coming.

What awaited her? It was awful to think that she might be superfluous where a short time before she had been a necessity, but it would be still more awful to turn aside without having once more tempted fate.

She had never received a letter from Voropayev, and Golyshev, with whom she kept up a correspondence, had not heard from him, either.

The situation was very alarming.

"And suppose he's no longer alive?.. Suppose I find nothing more than the place where he is buried?..."

The idea that Voropayev might have died very soon disappeared leaving behind two timid tears on her cheeks.

And so she went to sleep in her chair with tears in her eyes.

At dawn the boat crept cautiously into the little harbour with its clay-coloured water. The wet quay in the distance was crowded with people and lines of stevedores, but the shore seemed deserted, half-hidden as it was in the veil of rain.

Alexandra Ivanovna descended the slippery gangway at the same time as the other passengers.

A militiaman showed her the way to the district committee office.

The wind rippled and splashed the puddles in the muddy street, the ancient trees groaned and bent in the blast, but after the sea voyage the bad weather ashore seemed almost pleasant.

Voropayev was not to be found in the district committee. The secretary informed her that he was not feeling well and had to stay at home.

"Is it far?" she enquired.

The woman pointed out a two-storied house across the street.

"His room's number four. The door isn't locked. They're taking him his letters just now."

"Thank you."

When Alexandra Ivanovna went out into the street she remembered that she had her valise with her and wondered what she should do with it. Then she decided not to go back. As she went upstairs, she felt a weakness in her knees —the voyage must have upset her, after all.

She saw a half-open door and went in.

Entering from the dark passage, she saw part of a corner of a large room, a camp bed against the wall, and him, supporting himself on his elbow on the pillow.

Voropayev had not altered at all, but his face was much paler, wearier, tenser.

A child was singing a quiet song on the other side of the wall.

The man raised his eyes from his papers, expecting someone to come in.

"Yuri?" he called out, and coughed. "Is that you?"

"No, it's I," she said softly, pausing on the threshold, looking at him without seeing him, only hearing and feeling as though in a dream.

"You?.. My Shura . . ." he said voicelessly.

"Yes."

She crossed the room and sat down, just as she was in her coat, on the edge of the bed.

"Shura. . . Good God! What chance brought you here?"

"My own, Alesha," she smiled, at a loss what to say next. "Well, and how are you—here, in your paradise?"

He said nothing. His eyes spoke for him. He was looking at her as though at himself and she dreaded what he might see in her. Then suddenly his eyes lit up with such real and undisguised joy that she understood—everything would go well now.

Stooping over him, she kissed his pale lips that had become somehow like a child's and felt the strong active hand of a senior laid gently upon her head.

Translated by Hilda Kazanina

NIKOLAI TIKHONOV

BALLAD OF THE LETTER

He elbowed the wind, beyond the field—a dell,
The man came running, grew livid, fell.

Fell at the fire, whispered "A horse!"
Revived at the fire—continued his course.

Mounted his horse, lighted a smoke,
Four beating hoofs and the whip's even stroke.

Lake after lake, blow after blow,
The heaven was bent like a tautened bow.

Swift as a telegram flew the earth,
Strumming and humming with mundane mirth.

But the heart of a horse has limited powers.
Wound, as it is, for a couple of hours.

Two steps—a leap—the horse went lame.
Alone to the station the messenger came;

Breathing as loud as a bag full of holes.
"Good," said the station, thumping its poles.

"Good," the locomotive said,
And off to the north with the letter sped.

It sped ahead, slinging along,
Swinging a song, swinging a song.

Sixty versts, seventy versts,
Came to a bridge on the seventy-first.

A stick of dynamite hidden well—
Car after car was sent to hell.

Cabbage and cucumbers, rails and ties—
Up went the letter and up went the cries.

The pilot was drunk and in stubborn vein,
And a drunken gas fed the brain of his plane.

They scaled the sky in daring stride,
The darkness trembled and stepped aside.

Not a moon or a searchlight to lighten the way,
Not a rustling field or a rushing wave.

A cramp in the spine and an ache in the head—
Tula behind—Moscow ahead.

But all the instruments went to sleep
And the altimeter took a leap.

The earth came spinning to meet the plane,
People came running through the rain.

The pilot clenched his teeth to state—
"First the letter—the leg can wait."

The Moscow streets were dark and chill,
The Moscovites were sleeping still.

Deep and sound, the Kremlin slept,
But the people within their vigil kept.

A man took the letter covered with mud
And opened the envelope sticky with blood.

Wiping his hands on his tunic he read,
Then carelessly tore up the letter and said;

"It should have arrived an hour ago.
All that it tells me I already know."

YADRAN [1]

When a wintry dawn was unfolding
The roseate gauze of her fan,
I first had the joy of beholding
The emerald span of Yadran.

The sudden rush of the waters
Engulfed me in timeless tide,
Flooding olive trees, faint on the hillside,
The town lying pale as a bride.

All the bitter grief and injustice,
All the battles through which I had fought,
Were laved by the sparkling gladness
Which sun and sea foam had wrought.

I watched the waves conflicting,
Tumultuous waters elate,
Behold it—the joy of our struggle,
The struggle of Slavs against Fate.

This joy once again foams in wine jugs,
It creaks in rigging and spars,
It sounds in the songs, that like eagles
Are winging aloft to new stars.

This seething, ebullient gladness—
Green thunder proclaiming the might
Of battle-scarred gorges and forests,
The roar of the Partisans' night.

And the island—green against purple,
Where the radiant dawn had its birth,
Where Tito would pause 'mid the myrtle
To ponder the fate of the earth.

The flame of the dawn burst in glory,
O'er the numerous wounds of the land,
O'er the valourous hills, and the hoary
Crests of the waves called Yadran.

Translated by Margaret Wettlin

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[1] Southern Slavs' name for the Mediterranean from time immemorial.

861

NIZAMI

The 800th anniversary of the birth of Nizami Ganjevi, the great Azerbaijanian poet, was celebrated this year in the U.S.S.R.

When we read his immortal verses today we realize that the outlook on life, the *Weltanschauung*, of the poet was one that broke out of the shackles imposed by time. "If it should be asked down the centuries, 'Where is he?' every line of the poet's composition will respond like an echo: 'He is here!'" wrote Nizami.

Eight centuries separate us from him but still we place him in the ranks of the immortals whose names go down through the centuries enshrined in the undying giory of popular recognition. The great Russian poets, Pushkin, Lermontov, Nekrasov, the Georgian 13th-century classic, Shot'ha Rust'hveli, the 15th-century Uzbek classic, Ali Sher Nava'i, the 19th-century Ukrainian poet, Taras Shevchenko, the giants of the West, Dante, Shakespeare, Byron, Goethe—these are the legion in whose ranks Nizami stands.

Nizami's world had little in it to favour the ideals he championed. The 12th century, the period of the Shirvan Shahs in Nizami's homeland, saw the rule of violence, rapine and the cruel and sombre power of the feudal lords.

As a humanist, the poet dreamed of a dawn that would dispel the gloom, of Man, good and dutiful and the conqueror of those who destroyed life; he dreamed of courage, of integrity, of a lofty ideal of love that called for the performance of great deeds.

Nizami's poetical credo was permeated with a profound faith in the people, to whom he was joined by close ties. He wrote:

. . . Hold not thyself aloof from great affairs.
And string thy lute to meet with this world's strife,
For what thou winst is surely won in strife.

If thou wouldst live and hold thy head on high,
Then thou must fight, the trade of battle ply.
Make thy soul like unto a mirror true,
That shows what is, depicting nought askew.
And he who from his folk aloof doth stand,
His false head hides beneath a turban grand.

In the midst of savage fanaticism, he preached religious tolerance; to the limitations of irrational nationalism he opposed the full extent of an international outlook.

His verses pillorying the cruelty of the king and his satraps, his appeal for mercifulness reveal the full depth of his soul and the ardour of his protest against the blind and brutal persecution of the weak and oppressed.

Nizami was not afraid to raise his voice in condemnation of those who held in their hands the life and doom of the people and of the poet himself.

When Nizami spoke about his own freedom, his own independence, he stressed the fact that he was the product of his own labours, that he did not hold out his hands to anybody for alms.

We know very little of Nizami's life; most of what we do know is guesswork, the biographical details having been gathered from occasional references that occur in the poet's works.

Nizami was born in Ganja—hence his surname of Ganjevi—and spent the whole of his life there. The medieval town became the home of a great bard to whose writings the leading poets of his own time and of later centuries paid homage.

He married a slave girl sent to him as a gift—this in itself was a challenge to society. The slave girls of the period were beings with no human rights who could only expect any measure of happiness if their masters showed mercy to them. Nizami, however, called Afaq his wife, he took her into his house, drew her portrait, gave her immortality in his poems.

Nizami took as his sources the local folklore, his works depicted the heroes of his people but nevertheless he wrote in Persian, which at that time was the Latin of the East.

The poets of Nizami's time had a tortuous path to travel. The majority of them lived at the court of the all-powerful Shah, upon whose grace their livelihood entirely depended; he either showered gifts on them or subjected them to cruel punishments. This was the fate that overtook even such a distinguished poet as Hakani who called himself "a prophet amongst poets", "the best poet of the century." Ahistan, the ruler of Shirvan, thought that Hakani had given himself too much prominence in his poems and ordered his head to be cut off: the execution was stayed and the poet imprisoned as an act of mercy.

At the same time life at the court offered many advantages. Gifts came from the ruler himself and from his courtiers, all of whom could be bought by flattery in verse. He who flattered best, got most.

Nizami chose a different kind of life. In the big and wealthy town of Ganja he lived modestly, almost like a dervish, a philosopher who strove to attain independence and who would not barter his freedom or his life for a dubious success at court.

It was hard for him to keep the wolf from the door. True enough, he sent his works to rich patrons of the arts. His highly

862

placed friends, however, were not inclined to be generous when they read the poet's challenging verses concerning their tyrannies and their oppression of the people.

We may well imagine how the poet sat on a well-worn felt mat in his hovel; his book and his inkpot before him, beside him—his pilgrim's staff, every corner of the poor room breathing solitude. Here, in these surroundings, were born five great poems treasured in the memory of mankind—the *Hamsa* or *Quintette*.

In the palaces of the sultans rich carpets covered the floors—but the palaces have fallen into ruin, the treasures have disappeared while the poems, the immortal treasures of human genius, have remained. Nizami conquered the sultans and the men of riches; Nizami conquered time.

The first of his poems—*The Treasure House of Mysteries*—is an indictment of ignorant rulers, of those who criminally destroy life. Nizami realized that no destruction could check the growth of mankind. The number of crimes multiplied, but the names of the criminals were soon forgotten. Little is now remembered of the Sassanid Shah Anushirvan of whom Nizami speaks in one of the chapters of this poem. On one occasion Anushirvan, excited by the chase, lost sight of his suite and found himself in a ruined village alone with his vizier. There was nothing but desolation all round them. On the ruins of a wall the Shah and his vizier saw two owls. The loud cries of the owls against the background of the dreary ruins filled the Sassanid Shah with forebodings and he asked the vizier for an interpretation of what the birds were saying. The latter informed his lord that one of the owls was marrying her daughter to the other and by way of dowry demanded the ruins of this village with those of others in addition. The second owl said that she would willingly pay what was asked, since while Anushirvan lived the people would be poverty-stricken and she could add hundreds of ruined homes and villages to these two or three.

Nizami wrote in defence of those who toil, of the man "who digs into the soil with his fingernails and waters his fields with the sweat of his back." "I gain my pleasure from this, for the toil will bring me a hundred grains for every one that I have planted."

To the poet labour and love are the true deeds of valour. In the greatest of his poems, *Khosru and Shirin*, he depicts Shah Khosru as unworthy of the love of the gentle Shirin. The Shah is despicable, weak-willed and cunning. The true hero is Farhad, the builder and artisan, the first poetic hero of the Middle Ages to be inspired to titanic deeds by love for his people. Farhad was the prototype of the strong, tirelessly labouring titan.

Farhad did not fall in battle or single encounter, since his foe was too weak to fight him. He was trapped and killed by a base deception. The Uzbek poet Ali Sher Nava'i, who three centuries later continued this theme in his poem *Farhad and Shirin*, elevated these two characters to a very high moral

Nizami in old age *Gazanfan Khanykov*

level, and made Farhad symbolic of the labour of the people, of the creative strength that changes the world. In Nava'i's poem Shirin forsakes Khosru for Farhad, in Nizami's poem their love is only just budding forth.

Nizami's third poem, *Leila and Mejnun*, is a tale of great beauty and strength, the tale of the love of the Arab youth Mejnun for the maid, Leila. The simple story of the sufferings of young people parted by their parents, the naive tale of the Arabs, becomes in the hands of Nizami a song containing all the notes of romanticism. Mejnun, distracted with love, is a character that has been copied by countless poets since Nizami's time. Nizami took a legend current in his days in the Transcaucasus and introduced into it such a wealth of poetic description, gave it such powerful and profound content that the European Romeo and Juliet and the sufferings of young Werther pale before this creation of the Orient.

Nizami himself wrote at the end of his poem: "This tale, like the caravans, will travel through all lands in which there are people who believe in love."

The fourth poem is entitled *Seven Beauties* or *Seven Portraits*. Bahram Gur is the hero of this series of songs with its astonishing variety of form and content. He lives in turn in the seven palaces of seven different colours and listens to the tales told by the world's greatest beauties. Nizami would not have been true to himself had he been tempted to write a pretty fairy tale about the beauty of these seven maidens and the magic that their charms worked. His various coloured palaces—they range from black to white—symbolize the various stages of goodness and inner perfection met with in search of the ideal of happiness.

The stories contained in the *Seven Beauties*

are full of fantasy as well as details of manners and customs; in them we feel the same thirst after perfection that we find in Nizami's other poems. When Bahram, enjoying an easy but meaningless life, brings his kingdom to the verge of ruin, a simple shepherd teaches him the wisdom that makes a ruler; Bahram has to accept his advice in order to gain strength enough to repulse a foreign invasion that threatens his country. In stories that outline the ideal of a perfect love Nizami is always on the side of those who fight for their country, for the freedom of deep feelings: when he touches on the social aspect of life he brings death to traitors and disgrace and damnation to those who prey on the people. The poetic fabric of his work is multi-coloured, description and adventure are so well woven that the transition from the world of reality to that of fairyland takes place unnoticeably amidst a wealth of profound thought and poetic detail.

In the *Iskander Nameh* (Book of Alexander), the last of the five poems over which Nizami worked for many years, he depicts the great soldier, thinker and statesman, a man who dreamed of an ideal society situated somewhere on the upper reaches of the Yenisei. There he finds a marvellous state whose people lead a just life of labour. The people are happy, wealthy and free, devoting themselves entirely to their work and fearing no conquerors; an intelligent way of life is the rule and disease is unknown.

This is the dream of the poet himself outlined in verses of great beauty and is accompanied by a description of the heroic deeds of Alexander the Great. In this book Nizami seems to have tried to summarize his views on the world. He sings the praises of his native land, Azerbaijan, the beauty of its landscape and its cities.

Nizami wrote more than a hundred thousand lines of verse. Apart from his long poems he composed a large number of wonderful love lyrics.

In the course of many centuries Nizami's poems have been a source of inspiration to many poets. He influenced such poets as Khosru of India, Jami of Herat and Nava'i the founder of Uzbek literature who exclaims in the introduction to his poem *Farhad and Shirin*:

I've taken this quintette into my hand, [1]
But will my strength hold out unto the end?

Till now all those have failed when they did try
With Nizami their poet's skill to vie.

Nizami was a master of poetic style. His verses are faultless, rich in brilliant figures, with great attention paid to the elegance of form required by the poetry of the period. He made use of every poetic form of his time, from the quatrain to the complete novel in verse.

The Soviet Union is celebrating the Nizami jubilee in the same year as the 30th Anniversary of the October Revolution. Soviet people are a friendly family of nations. Regions that were once thought of as the outskirts of the Russian empire are now fraternal Soviet Socialist republics, equal, and well on the path of progress. The national festival of Azerbaijan this year is doubly significant in view of the fact that it coincides with the festival of all the peoples of the Soviet Union.

Nizami's verses have greater strength today than they had in his own time because in those days they were known only to court circles and to a small group of scholars; today his poems are available to all peoples.

NIKOLAI TIKHONOV

Leila and Mejnun — *V. Timchenko*

[1] A reference to Nizami's *Hamsa*, a cycle of five poems.

.864

NOTES ON SOVIET WARTIME STORIES

"The pen cannot dull the sword, nor the sword the pen."

The wisdom of this ancient Spanish proverb, so often quoted by Cervantes, is illustrated by the new period of development that began in Soviet literature during the war years.

The epoch-making story of battle and victory, written by the Soviet people with their blood, has found reflection in all genres of Soviet literature—in the novel, drama, poetry. A special place, however, belongs to the short story. The intensely human episodes of the war brought out to the full all the possibilities of the short story. Feature stories, sketches, short stories were born in the front line notebooks of writers or war correspondents, and through the pages of newspapers brought the hot breath of war to their readers.

The Soviet wartime short story is a comprehensive and complex subject, so we shall limit this review to the works of five writers: L. Sobolev, N. Tikhonov, V. Kozhevnikov, C. Simonov and V. Katayev.

In the autumn of 1941, Leonid Sobolev, one of the best-known Soviet writers of sea stories, found himself in besieged Odessa as the war correspondent of a Moscow newspaper. Here, in the midst of battle, he wrote the first stories which were later included in *Sailor Soul*, a collection of stories recording the exploits performed by Soviet sailors during the heroic defence of Odessa and Sevastopol.

Sobolev's stories are concise and succinct. Events which could have provided a subject for a long novel are compressed within the limits of a short story. The plot is always simple and unpretentious. The author, himself a naval officer, is in his element when he describes life at sea, but he never wearies the reader with tiresome descriptions and unnecessary nautical terminology.

Sobolev concentrates entirely on his hero—"sea-soul", as Russian sailors have long been lovingly nicknamed. The writer is at one with his hero, and loves him for what he is, for what he has been made by the difficult service of the sea with its grim romanticism. Passionately fond of life, daring in battle and faithful in friendship, merry and brave, self-assured, prepared to do a desperate deed when necessary, perhaps with a streak of vanity and sometimes given to flowery language—such are the features of this hero to whom nothing human is alien. Sobolev has created an unforgettable image of the Soviet sailor, with his excellent fighting and moral qualities.

The unique feature of these stories is the harmonious stylistic unity of the heroic and the lyrical. We feel the author's anxiety for his heroes' fate appearing through the simple and passionate sincerity of the narrative. Lyricism and a fine intimacy of approach emphasize the intensely human attributes of his heroes, their unquenchable thirst for joy, love, friendship.

"In the shadow of death . . . man instinctively seeks human warmth. How many hearty, firm embraces have I seen in the silent, serious moments before the men set out on a battle flight, or to sea, or on a scouting mission. I have seen tears in the eyes of brave men, tears of farewell, a proud sign of weakness of the fighting man's great soul."

The short story *Tatyana, the Scout*, tells of the love of Efim Dyrshch, the giant gun captain, for Tatyana, the girl scout of a detachment of marines. This frail little girl, with her merry disposition and courage in battle, whom the destinies of war had brought to the detachment, was adored by the rough sailors, the reckless, warm-hearted men who "played with death every night." They guarded her zealously and tenderly against bullets and shell splinters, against rude jokes and importunity. When one of the sailors, who fancied himself a lady-killer, decided to try his charms on Tatyana, Efim quietly called him aside and threatened him with an enormous clenched fist.

"See this?" he asked in a low voice. "You're disgracing the detachment. I'd have yer treat a girl like that decently. D'yer understand? Repeat what I said."

Efim himself did not dare to tell the girl of his love, fearing to trouble her and to disturb the tranquillity of the detachment. He kept silent and only dreamed of the future—he saw his cottage on the bank of the Dnieper, with Tatyana in it, he pictured moonlit evenings in the garden. . . .

But a day came when Tatyana did not return from a combat mission. The gun captain's grief, his tears, the rage with which he threw himself upon the enemy in order to save the girl, his las words when brought back badly wounded—all this is conveyed truthfully, without sickening sentimentality or false heroics.

"He sat with his head sunk on his knees, and silent sobs shook his great frame. Perhaps it were better to leave him alone: sometimes sorrow is best borne in solitude. Yet there was something in this giant's grief that frightened me, and I sat down next to him." The gun captain's grief did not isolate him from his men, just as his selfless love had not blinded him to all else.

The impression created by the story is enhanced by the author's delicate lyric reflections, by the unnoticeable transitions from the ordinary to the sublime, from the prosaic to the romantic, and finally by the kindly humour that pervades the entire book.

Equally unforgettable is the short tale about Leonard, the barber, "the magician of the razor and the curling tongs," the "Figaro of Odessa." He came to the sailors regularly, by tram (that is how they went to the front in Odessa!), a lively, witty youth with skillful hands and the mind of a dreamer, and each of his visits was a "merry festival of hygiene" which he rounded up with a violin concert that, of course, did not form a part of his duties. Leonard dreamed of the time when the war would be over and he would be able to study music. But the war was only beginning and instead of the conservatory, the hospital awaited him. . . ,

An enemy bomb struck a house, caved in and buried an air-raid shelter under its debris. Panic began in the shelter. "Suddenly, Leonard's ringing voice was heard. 'Sh-h! what's the matter? Just a little alarm. It's all over already, the bomb's dropped, and there won't be any more. . . Keep quiet, please! I'm at the opening, let me keep in touch with the men outside!'" Everybody in the shelter heard him calling for help, giving orders and advice, asking how the excavation work was proceeding, and then conveying the answer back into the darkness!

More than twenty-four hours passed. Then help came, but not from the side where Leonard lay. Because there was no opening on that side, just as there had been no firemen for many long hours. All this had been a noble "white lie", cleverly invented by the merry barber Leonard in order to instil hope and strength into the despairing people in the shelter.

The art of short-story writing demands from the author the ability of saying much in a few words. Sobolev is a past master of this art.

The majestic but grim epic of the siege of Leningrad, privations and endurance of its population, will live forever in the memories of freedom-loving people the world over.

The Meeting, by Nikolai Tikhonov, tells how a certain theatrical producer, going home one night through the empty, ice-coated streets of the beleaguered city, meets an old man in the last stages of exhaustion from cold and hunger. The producer supports the stranger and, in silence, leads him "tenderly, as though he were his sick father" to the door of his home. At the "black, cave-like entrance to the house" the old man broke the silence:

"'Young man,' he said, and the pale shadow of a smile hovered around his thin, bloodless lips, 'do you know the name of the city in which you live?'

"The producer waited in silence. The old man approached his emaciated face close to him.

"'You live in Ilion!' he said loudly.

"'In Ilion!' repeated the producer. 'What makes you compare our city with Troy?'

"'Forgive me, I am a teacher of ancient history. . . I know of no other city with a legend as grand as that of Troy, and our city today—don't you agree—not only equals but excels Ilion in heroism. . . .'

"'Yes, you're right,' said the producer, 'but in our Troy there will never be a wooden horse! Never!'

"They shook hands warmly, wished each other good night, and parted."

To this glorious city, the city of victorious life, Tikhonov has dedicated a cycle of short stories known as *Leningrad Tales*.

Tikhonov himself is a native of Leningrad, and he loves his city like one who has not only shared its triumphs and rejoiced at its achievements in the days of peaceful constructive work but who has lived with it through its days of great suffering and fortitude. He reaches the inner essence, the soul of the events which he depicts; his opportunities as an eyewitness of and participant in these events he uses chiefly for the portrayal of human characters, of the separate, individual, emotional world of different people, united by the common struggle, by the consciousness of their patriotic duty. A feature of this book is the large number of characters that appear in it. Before the reader passes a long procession of people of different ages and walks of life, of different social positions and habits. Each of them had his own road and aims in life. The siege surrounded them with a ring of death and their roads merged, their aims became one. Even the most intimate human feelings were coloured by the glow of grand events.

Little Yura loved animals, "but he was ashamed to admit that best of all he loved the big plaster-of-Paris lion" which stood at the entrance to the Zoological Gardens. One day a bomb fell in the Zoo and killed an elephant, wounded the monkeys and smashed Yura's idol—the plaster lion. The child cried bitterly and in his little heart hatred was born for those who destroyed everything that was good and beautiful. Together with his little playmates he decided to build a barricade behind the house. Several days later he was brought home, stunned by the blast of an explosion. In his pocket his mother found a piece of the paw of his beloved plaster lion. (*The Lion's Paw.*)

Two motifs merge in Tikhonov's stories—that of the unity of beauty and truth, of the lovely with the moral and that of the stronger, omnipotent motif of love of life and its joys. To live in freedom, to enjoy the beautiful, to sing and to laugh, to work and to create—that is the great and precious gift which Tikhonov's heroes safeguard, and for which they are prepared to give their lives.

Let us turn to his short story *The Apple Tree*. In a bomb shelter, amongst the other Leningraders, we meet an artist. All around the bombs are falling, houses are collapsing, people are dying. Then the raid ends and the artist steps out of the dark cellar into the moon-flooded street of the wintry city. He is exhausted from lack of sleep and nervous tension. His excited imagination works feverishly, his artistic sensibilities, his gift of perceiving form and colour are sharpened. In the light of the moon everything appears to him in new, dazzling beauty—the lovely city rising all around him, his own house and his old friend the apple tree

still standing by the fountain. He feels as though he has come back to earth and sees in a new light this "wonderful world of beauty, heroism, labour, splendour." Such sudden esthetic revelation, "when the nature surrounding us suddenly appears in all the triumph of its life-giving strength, in all its splendour, its inexhaustible wealth, its inimitability"—such a revelation is capable of effecting a profound moral change in the human soul.

The Apple Tree is a philosophical story, characteristic of the whole of Tikhonov's book. Its subtitle, *The Features of the Soviet Man* stresses the author's aim: to portray the character of Soviet people who bore the heavy burden of suffering and struggle during the war. Tikhonov's artistic perception is distinguished by its profundity, clarity and keen psychological observation.

Tikhonov is indifferent to artful devices in story writing and to externally amusing or unusual facts. He finds the unusual in the ordinary, and possesses the faculty of showing his heroes from an unexpected angle. He has no dull or gloomy tones on his palette, they have no place in the sharp light-and-shade effect produced by the contrast of bright and dark colours.

At the end of his book about the war Vadim Kozhevnikov has included several stories, written in the thirties, portraying Soviet people at work during the period of construction. The inclusion of these tales in the book of war stories is fully justified. The heroes of Kozhevnikov's pre-war stories were men and women who had found joy in work, inspired masters proud in the knowledge of the social significance of their Socialist labour. In peacetime they worked selflessly in the fields, in factories or on construction sites, labouring that their country might prosper. The hour of war came, and they went to war with the same spirit they had displayed in their work. We meet them on the battlefield and we understand the forces which turned the modest worker into a gallant soldier.

Kozhevnikov is interested in the nature of courage and in the patriotism of the Soviet citizen which begets it. At the same time, he portrays the individual features of the men who perform these exploits and the different roads which lead them to heroism. Some come to it through personal grief (*March-April*), others lead by the desire to live up to their comrades (*Kuzma Tarasyuk*), some by the feeling of responsibility for the future of their people (*The Vow*), and lastly by the soldier's pride (*The Navigator's Pride*). These ways are as varied as human characters and destinies.

Kozhevnikov is an observant and sensitive narrator of war events. Thoughtfully and truthfully, treasuring each important detail, but never losing himself in a wealth of naturalistic description, he paints the picture of the great war, its grim working days, its joys and sorrow, its modest participants and glorious heroes, revealing the inner motives that guide their behaviour.

Kozhevnikov's short stories are, as a rule, built up on true facts selected with that care and delicacy of taste which distinguishes the true artist. His works show that the short story and the essay are kindred genres, both in their origin and artistic function. If the contents of a short story are confined to present-day reality and not subordinated to an all-effacing plot, and if the material used for a feature story or essay is important enough in itself to be typical, the two resemble each other as works of art and as artistic monuments of their epoch.

The daring obliteration of the conventional border lines between the short story and the essay or sketch, their fruitful union, is a tradition of the Russian classic tale from Turgenev's *Notes of a Sportsman* down to Gorky's stories, a tradition rooted in the close attention of our literature to the surrounding reality, to people, to the most pressing problems of contemporary times.

The four volumes of Constantine Simonov's book *From the Black to the Barents Seas* contain all the writer's notes from the fronts of the Patriotic War. The first part appeared in 1942, the fourth in 1945. From sea to sea, from the first day of the war to the last—such is the scope of the book. The author himself describes his stories as "fragmentary and incomplete notes" about deeds which he witnessed and people whom he met. That is true. But these sketches have one great merit: there is nothing colourless or cold in them—everything is illumined by the light of the titanic struggle, animated by the warmth of great and fine human feelings.

Simonov is not troubled by the search for an unusual hero. His heroes are ordinary Soviet soldiers and officers. This, indeed, is a specific feature of Soviet people—heroism has become an every-day, normal manifestation of their character. "If," writes Simonov, "a monument were to be erected to the greatest force on earth, the force of the people's soul, the sculptor should carve the figure of a Russian infantryman marching through the snow, with his back slightly bent, his cap pulled over his eyes, his haversack and rifle slung over his shoulder." This is Simonov's hero. The descriptions of frontline life, battle scenes and chronicle of war events do not overshadow Simonov's hero. He is portrayed in the book as the author saw and knew him in the course of four years of war.

As he himself explains, Simonov's war stories were born of the natural desire of the artist to typify and depict in picturesque form certain of the more characteristic occurrences which he met with as a war correspondent. War is always full of surprises, which afford gratifying material for the novelist. The great 19th-century Russian critic Belinsky, in describing a tale (or a short story, as in his time these conceptions were not differentiated) as "an episode from the endless poem of human destinies" and a chapter taken from a novel, wrote: "There are events and happenings which would not suffice for a drama or a novel, but which are profound, in which more of life is concentrated in one moment than could be lived through in centuries: the tale catches them

and imprisons them within its narrow limits."

Let us take Simonov's story *Aksinia Ivanovna's Son*. It is based on the biography of a Soviet officer, Colonel Sergei Vershkov. The son of a simple Cossack woman, he travelled the long road from a rank-and-file cavalryman in the Civil War to commander of a Cossack Volunteer Division at the beginning of the recent war. One of the episodes in his life drew the author's special attention.

Vershkov's division was the last to leave during the Soviet troops' retreat from Kiev. The situation was extremely serious. On the opposite bank of the Dnieper, Vershkov heard the reports of the section commanders, each of whom had crossed the river in different places and by different means. Ordinarily a kind-hearted and a lenient man, Vershkov could not, and had not the right in that tragic hour to forgive cowardice or panic. Two of the commanders, who had lost their men in the crossing, heard the dread word: court martial. The next to report was the colonel's younger brother, Mikhail Vershkov, commander of a battery. His appearance was dishevelled, and "for the first time in his life a feeling of terror took hold of Colonel Vershkov. It seemed to him that, to judge by his appearance, Mishka, had like those others, crossed the river alone, losing his men, abandoning his guns. He knew that if this were so, no power on earth could save him, because he, Vershkov, who had just sent two officers to be tried by court martial, must now do the same to his own brother. . . ."

It turned out that the younger Vershkov had saved both his men and his guns.

" 'Good,' said the colonel. 'Come in, Comrade Senior Lieutenant,' and turning, he led the way, stooping a little, into the fisherman's hut where he had taken up his quarters.

"Once through the door, he flung his arms around his brother and clasped him so tightly that the latter could barely repress a cry of pain. Mishka sat down opposite the colonel and, for the first time in the last three months of war, he winked and laid aside the official tone:

"'So you got the wind up, Comrade Colonel?'

" 'I did,' said Vershkov. 'Here, have a smoke. What would I have said to mother. . .' He broke off in the middle of the sentence and silently held out his cigarettes to Misha."

By the completeness of its theme, the above excerpt can stand alone as a finished short story, answering to the strictest demands of the genre.

The short story is sometimes spoken of as a sister to the drama; in respect of the incident quoted, this definition is absolutely true. It describes only a few minutes in the life of a man, yet these contain so much drama, such profound emotion that the entire character of the man is laid bare as by a flash of lightning. The story has a plot and plenty of dramatic tension working up to a crisis.

The second, superb short story *The Deathless Name* originated in the following way. Driving through the water divides of the Bug, Dniester, and Pruth in the wake of our army, Simonov noticed everywhere, on the walls of houses, on wrecked tanks, on telegraph posts, the following inscriptions: "Road reconnoitred. Artemyev." "No mines. Artemyev." "Bridge built. Artemyev;" or simply "Artemyev", and an arrow pointing ahead. This went on for many hundreds of kilometres, until at last, on the right bank of the Pruth, he saw a fresh grave with a little wooden pyramid as a tombstone and a board with the words: "Major A. N. Artemyev, who died a sapper's heroic death during the crossing of the river Pruth, lies buried here." Below, four words had been chalked in big letters: "Forward to the West!" Subsequently, however, much to his surprise the writer saw the familiar inscriptions again and again. "Road reconnoitred. Artemyev." "Crossing built. Artemyev." But there was nothing mysterious about this. The men of the sapper battalion, honouring the memory of their fallen commander, continued to call the battalion by his name.

This was an ordinary enough event at the front, but seen through the imagination of the poet, it became poetry, stirring and life assertive. Major Artemyev, who never appears in person in the story, is its soul and meaning. He is not merely an artistic image accepted as a reality, but the symbol of man's eternal life in his actions continued and completed by others. The author ends the story with the words: "And when I met this same deathless name again and again, ten, thirty and even seventy kilometres farther on, it seemed to me that in the near future, at the crossings over the Nieman, the Oder and the Spree, I should inevitably find the little wooden board with the words 'Road reconnoitred. Artemyev.'"

The realism of Simonov's short stories is very profound, historically accurate and bears the imprint of that healthy romanticism that is born of the passionate desire to see the image of the future in the present.

Outstanding amongst the tales included in Valentin Katayev's new book is the short story *Our Father*, the narrative of a day in the life of a young woman and her four-year-old son in enemy-occupied Odessa. This tiny cross section of life is given in such concentrated form and with such power of expression that the story resembles a tightly compressed spring: its own inner force urges expansion.

On that day the frost in Odessa would have been severe even for a northern city. Long before dawn the mother and her son went out into the street. She was a Jewess, her son's father a Russian. On that day they were to go to the ghetto, to certain death. And she decided to walk through the streets of the city as long as she could.

In the street they were met by the loud crowing of a cock, announcing the advent of a new day over the loudspeakers, followed by a child's angelic voice saying "Good Morning" three times, and then proceeding solemnly to repeat the Lord's Prayer.

From that moment their sufferings began: the physical sufferings of a child who could not understand anything, and the moral

sufferings of an absolutely guiltless woman, driven by fear and the desperate wish to live through the streets of their native city in which the enemy was master. At the hour of curfew, when all who appeared in the streets were liable to be shot, she dragged herself, half dead, with the child in her arms to the park near the sea front. The park was empty. On one bench sat an old man, coated to the waist with hoarfrost. . . .

In the morning, a motor lorry appeared in the park:

"The lorry stopped twice. The first time, it stopped near the bench where the old man sat who had frozen to death. The second time it stopped near the bench on which sat the woman with the child. They sat next to each other. She was holding his hand. . . The soldiers swung the woman up and down and tossed her into the lorry with her legs still bent. She knocked against the old man as though she were made of wood. Then the soldiers swung and lightly tossed the boy, also with his legs bent. He knocked against the woman as though he were made of wood, too, and even bounced a little.

"As the lorry moved on, the cock crowed over the loudspeaker, announcing the beginning of a new day. Then the child's gentle voice spoke thrice with its angelic intonation: 'Good morning! Good morning! Good morning!' "

"And then the same voice proceeded, unhurriedly and fervently, to repeat the Lord's Prayer:

" 'Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. . .' "

Here we have satire in which there is no laughter, an indictment in which the voice of the accuser is not heard. The sacred anger and hatred of the humanist writer for the world's greatest evil—the fascist race "theory" and practice—are purposely hidden under the epically calm and unhurried, detailed tone of the narrative. This is not Katayev's usual style, but here it served its purpose: to force the truth of life, naked and terrible, to speak for itself without the guiding hand of the author. He leads us through one of the circles of the fascist inferno and we see once more what a monstrous threat this by no means imaginary hell presented to humanity.

The problem of genre is not one only of form but, first and foremost, of content. Like all other literary genres, the Soviet short story aims at giving a profound and truthful portrayal of the life and spiritual power of the people who won peace for the world with their blood, and who now, with their inherent selflessness, creative talent and persistence, are restoring their country and furthering its progress along the road to Communism.

The short stories of Sobolev, Tikhonov, Kozhevnikov, Simonov and Katayev are alike in their essence—contact with the life of people, veracity, high ideals, humanism, the fervour of romantic prevision of the future. At the same time, they differ in their technique, artistic methods, approach to the material, shortly, in all those specific features which determine their artistic uniqueness.

During the war, when all the achievements of human culture and, in the first place, their creator, man himself, were threatened with destruction, the wise and humane behests left to Soviet literature by Gorky became particularly understandable and precious. According to Gorky's definition, "Socialist realism asserts existence as action, as creation, the aim of which is the constant development of man's most valuable individual talents for his victory over the forces of nature, for the sake of his own health and longevity, for the great happiness of living on earth, the whole of which, he, in accordance with the steady growth of his requirements, wants to master, as the lovely home of mankind united in one family."

By its ideological and thematic content, the heroic realistic short story with a large share of romanticism has become the leading type in this genre. As we have seen above, however, the short story was by no means limited to the heroic theme alone. Love, friendship, art, family life, everything which fills man's life even in an epoch of vast social upheavals, draw the novelists' attention. But Soviet literature does not know such minor forms as "thrillers", stories with a "happy ending", detective stories, stories with a "good plot" written in pleasing style, regardless of the ideological content, and so forth. Neither in the traditions of Russian classic literature, followed by Soviet novel writing, nor in Soviet present-day reality itself, nor in the tastes and demands of the wide reading public, will our writer find encouragement or material for these types of literary creation. Their cultivation would mean replacing an artistic perception of life by cheap entertainment, mysticism or false optimism, it would signify a denial of the achievements of Socialist realism.

ISRAIL MIRIMSKY

ARTS

BORDER LINES IN THE ARTS OF THE THEATRE AND THE CINEMA

(A Regisseur Views the Problem)

Is there a border line? Is the same artistic problem handled differently in the theatre and in the cinema? How can the most effective use be made of the specific possibilities which each of these arts offers.

Today it is well-nigh impossible to draw a line without first undertaking an analysis of certain changes that have taken place and consequently are still taking place within that ideological superstructure we term the arts. Purely technical inventions in the sphere of art have affected the course of art's development. Writing and later printing set their stamp on oral literature and graphic art. The radio with its infinite possibilities for bridging distances was bound to exercise a tremendous influence on national music and, consequently, on painting and dancing as well. The growth of manufacturing towns attracted the peasant population from various parts of the country which together with increased transportation, facilitated the mingling of the melodies of formerly isolated backwoods. The process of diffusion is multiplied a hundredfold when the songs come to be broadcast.

The impact of photography on painting and graphic art is obvious enough. Documentary reproduction of life—formerly the work of the artist—has now completely passed to the realm of photography. If one of the functions of painting and drawing has been transferred, then the other functions will develop somewhat differently and the artistic transformation of reality will have greater scope when the purely documentary drawing is no longer needed.

All works of art may be divided into two distinct categories. Under the first come arts which work up material. We may call these the material-dimensional arts: painting, graphic art, sculpture, architecture and the applied arts grouping around them. The second group consists of those that represent a process of art—music, the theatre arts, the cinema and literature.

There is a marked difference in the evolution of the material-dimensional arts and the second group which we may call the transitory arts, since each represents a process in point of time. The former being of a tangible and durable material preserve definite traditions and forms for a longer period of time. This, one should think, applies particularly to architecture. There is much less possibility of preserving traditions in the transitory arts and the life span of a song is definitely much shorter than that of a capital or an ornament.

We are in the habit of dividing up the great family of the professional stage arts into the theatre (which includes the drama, opera, musical comedy, ballet and puppet theatre), the circus, the concert stage and the cinema. Of course, here a distinction must be made between motion pictures from life, stereoscopic films and the animated cartoon films.

The youngest of this group is the cinema. Its brothers proudly date their origin back hundreds and thousands of years, trying thereby to convince themselves of their immortality.

Nevertheless, the present form of the drama, regarded as the eldest brother, is so unlike its predecessors, that we can hardly go back to an earlier period than the 17th and 18th century and even then only by a stretch of imagination.

Imagine yourself seated in a mountain hollow, on the stone bench of a huge amphitheatre with 20,000 or 40,000 other spectaters. There in front of you is a singing chorus with three actors in wooden masks, worn over the head. The dramatists are engaged in a contest of wits and the actors recite monologues of the tragedy. This is what the theatre was like in the age of Aeschylus.

Now imagine yourself standing in the market place of a township. There is a wooden platform and on it gaudily-attired actors. Improvisations in the language of the streets, characterizations from life with the colours laid on thick, and the story built around a

very complicated fairy-tale plot. Such was the Commedia del'Arte.

And now imagine yourself in the auditorium of the Moscow Art Theatre. A closed box stage, a psychological drama with the actors scarcely differing in appearance from the audience. It is the opening night of the *Sea Gull*. What is there in common between these three forms unless, perhaps, that in each there is an audience: but an audience is requisite for every form of show. The ancient theatre of the Greeks died and the Commedia del'Arte vanished, so what reason have we to suppose that contemporary drama (in its present form) will not evolve into something distinctly different from its present form, so different that not even a little feather from the sea gull's wing will remain.

I do not by any means intend to prophesy the dying out of any of the contemporary forms of stage art. What, however, I do wish to stress is that the evolution of the varieties and forms of these arts is inevitable, and, it seems to me, any changes that take place in these arts in the future are bound to be directly influenced by the development of the youngest brother of this family of arts—the cinema, which, Lenin said, was to us the most important of the arts.

To be able to understand or, at least, to form an approximate idea of the possible lines along which the theatrical and cinematographic arts are bound to develop, it is first of all necessary to establish the fundamental differences between the art of the theatre and that of the cinema. We must decide which of the functions of the theatre have not been replaced by the cinema, and what scenic qualities are possessed by the theatre but not by the cinema.

Here the first thing likely to occur to one is that the theatre is a three-dimensional art having space and depth, while the screen shows us everything in one plane.

Now let us see how true it is that the theatre gives us a feeling of depth whereas the third dimension is absent from the screen. A careful analysis of our own sensations in this respect will soon serve to show that this is not the case.

On the stage the action is virtually set in the frame of the portal and what we get is a frontal view of it. Strictly speaking, what comes within our field of vision is not the true dimensions at the stage, but the representation of those dimensions giving it a likeness to haut-relief. The players, as a rule, try to come forward, and are averse to retiring too far into the depth of the stage, particularly if it is built horizontally.

The most common movements made by the actor on the stage are either forward movements or movements along a slightly diagonal line which, again, is reminiscent of the movement in a haut-relief.

Hence, with the action confined to the front part of the stage, within the frame of the portal, the composition of the mise-en-scènes, too, is restricted by the frame of the portal, and there is a disposition towards a central axis even when the mise-en-scènes are not symmetrical. The conventional coulisse, built, as a rule, on both sides of the stage, as well as the top of the stage suspended from the fire bars, all keep the space of the stage within bounds making it quite clear, as it were, that there is no exceeding the bounds. There is no sky overhead on the stage. It may be "played" but physically it does not exist, so that an ascent into the heavens made with the aid of an appropriate contrivance interests the spectator merely as a trick and not as an element of the action.

Now, what is our reaction to space on the screen? Least of all does the action on the screen appear two-dimensional to us. What the spectator sees on the screen, he sees through the eye of the camera, his own eye moving, as it were, with the eye of the camera. This bears little resemblance to the movement of the eye across the front of the stage wherein a conventional, haut-relief rendering of the dimensions, is apparent. There is a fundamental difference between the panorama on the stage and the panorama on the screen. In the case of the former, the scenes pass before the spectator's gaze, and in the latter the spectator passes by the scenes. Thus, in the cinema, the spectator, as it were, does not sit in his seat at all. Together with the camera he mounts rooftops and looks down at the view below; he descends into basements and from there contemplates the view above. He sees now the hat tops, now the boot soles of the passers-by. A close-up brings him face to face with the character on the screen while a long-range shot will take him miles away from the same person. In the cinema the spectator is, so to say, in perpetual motion within the space depicted on the screen and not outside of it as is the case in the theatre.

In the theatre the restriction of the dimensions to the portal frame and the front of the stage leads the play director to indulge in compositions not unlike the graphic design of the draughtsman, whereas in the cinema

these restrictions are absent and the director does not have to subordinate his composition to the frame of the shot; with the movement of the camera this frame, as such, disappears altogether. Too much finish in the shot, practised by a number of film directors, is bound to give a false theatrical effect in the film, a "print" effect, and flings the spectator, as it were, back into his seat in the auditorium, preventing him from roaming about with the camera in the broad, endless spaces which film art may encompass and which is one of the screen's principal assets.

I readily admit that my arguments in regard to the two-dimensional character of the stage and the presence of the third dimension on the obviously two-dimensional screen may not appear sufficiently convincing. However, a few years hence, when the stereoscopic film comes into its own the third dimension will exist on the screen in actual fact. Thus, when technical perfection will be attained in the reproduction of sound, in colour and in stereoscopy, the cinema show will outwardly be no different from the presentation on the stage and yet, with its possibilities of movement in space, may prove in many ways far more effective. Does that, however, mean that the audience's reaction to what it sees on the screen will be the same as its reaction to a show on the stage and even intensified by the screen's new possibilities of expression? Were it so we would be compelled to come to the conclusion that with the lapse of a certain period of time the cinema will supplant all forms of the show and if the theatres do remain it is only to perform the function of a sort of laboratory. Theatres of this type already exist. Here plays are put on either for the purpose of training cinema actors or to test the public's reaction to the story of a future film.

Hence, to know where the dividing line may be drawn, to show where the possibilities of the stage end and those of the cinema begin, to find sufficient ground to assert the perpetual co-existence of these two arts, it is necessary to get at the difference between them. Inasmuch as we have not discovered that difference in the sphere of the dimensions, we might seek for it in the different rules regulating the time element which to the same extent as space is one of the requirements of stage and cinema art.

In the cinema as well as in the theatre there are two time limits to be considered. The first is the limit of time over which the story extends. This time limit rarely coincides with the actual time of the show. A play or a film which runs for two hours may cover a span of a year, two years and even a hundred years, depending on the story. And with every act, scene, or even shot we may be transported into an altogether different period of time, into the future and back into the past.

However, apart from the time over which the story extends, there is the time limit physically necessary for the process of acting. And it is this time limit which is the principal tool of the director and the actor. It sets the pace and rhythm of the performance in a progression of sound and movement.

In the cinema this time period may be organized in exactly the same way as in the theatre but the cinema may dispose of time in a manner which the theatre cannot. It may stretch it or squeeze it, as the case may be. Furthermore, in the cinema the shifting of scenes is affected by the simple expedient of one shot succeeding another, whereas the theatre demands "physical time" for this purpose. Also the physical time limit within the shot itself may be accelerated or retarded by the click of the camera wherein the tempo of physical movement reproduced on the screen is accordingly speeded up or slackened thus acquiring a singular force of expressiveness quite its own and quite beyond the power of the theatre.

Nor is that all. By employing the same means the cinema may turn the time limit of the story itself into physical time and reduce a period of time within the story, say, of over a month, to 15 or 20 minutes. And, on the contrary, the camera may stretch half a minute of story time to a whole hour's screen time. And to this we may add that the film camera possesses the power of magnifying and reducing to any possible degree physical space and volume. There is a film about the growth of a bean. Here the camera was set at the slowest pace—only a few revolutions a day. The shooting of the film continued a number of days. In the picture in which the process of the bean's growth is shown, days were squeezed into a few minutes. While another picture shot with the camera set at a very fast pace and equipped with a powerful magnifying lens, runs for several minutes though the actual shooting of what it depicts—a battle of microbes—lasted no more than a few seconds.

The same methods in regard to physical time may be practised and are practised in feature films.

872

What conclusion is to be drawn after considering the difference of the regulation of time at the theatre and on the screen? There is only one possible conclusion. Namely, that the cinema is not only in a position to reproduce the time regulations of the theatre but is able to intensify its expressiveness. Inasmuch as an identical conclusion was reached relating the third dimension, it may be said that in regard to the space, to sound and colour, that is, in its appeal to the ear and eye of the audience, the cinema is not only a match for the theatre but may even achieve greater expressiveness.

However, what other elements apart from seeing and hearing go into our reaction to a show? Wherein must we seek for those elements in the theatre which cannot be reproduced by the art of the cinema?

An analysis of the reaction of the audience to a concert and variety program and its reaction to the same program on the screen will enable us to bring these elements to light. A number of concert, variety and circus programs have been screened. And it appeared that the film-goer was not disposed to show even a tenth part of the admiration he is wont to give to the same artists when they appear in a concert on the stage.

Nor can the blame for this be laid at the door of the performers or the directors of the film, for to reproduce a concert recital on the screen is technically possible but to get the audience to react in the same way is utterly impossible.

And what makes it impossible is the meaning behind the word "reproduction" or rather behind the little prefix "re".

The very fact of reproduction signifies that the work of art in question has been accomplished in the past.

What you see in the theatre, on the concert stage or in the circus occurs contemporaneously with your perceiving it. Whereas what you see on the screen has occurred earlier and therefore is not contemporaneous with your perception of it.

This may perhaps be best illustrated if we imagine the screen endeavouring to do justice to the illusionist's art. And even were his performance reproduced in a sound, colour and stereoscopic film, still the spectator is not liable to enjoy the tricks as he would at a first-hand performance. For his enjoyment is chiefly derived from the fact that he himself assists at the performance with the legerdemain taking place before his eyes.

To lend greater conviction to his performance the conjuror will borrow now a beret, now a handkerchief or a coin from one of the audience and conjure from it his pigeons or white mice. On the screen you can go ahead and conjure two locomotives out of a coin and yet the spectator will remain as cool as a cucumber. And no tricks of the camera, no optic illusion will help the film director.

In the same way an attempt to present an animal tamer on the screen is bound to fall through. As part of a story or in a newsreel it may be done. But, all the same, one gets the pleasure from the spectacle at the circus because the performance there is contemporaneous with your perception and you feel its palpable rhythm and are aware of the great risk which the tamer takes. On the screen all this is lost.

In the theatre the spectator subconsciously and with good reason feels that he assists at the creative act, that he is a co-creator of it and that in a way, it is as unique as each performance always is. For the actor's performance on a particular night, his mood that night, the tone of his delivery are all affected by the kind of audience he plays to, how full the house is and even by a chance coughing in the auditorium.

At the cinema he does not get the gratification of being a witness and co-participant of the creative act. Hence the eagerness of film fans to see the stars in the flesh or hear them sing their favourite songs.

The source of the spectator's pleasure in assisting at the creative act is his witnessing the assumption and growth of character on the stage, the process of incarnation, or, to be more exact, transformation. By the sculptor's creative act stone is shaped into man. The painter turns the paints on the canvas into clouds, birds and flowers.

In the creative process on the stage not only does the actor assume the character of another—Moskvin that of Luka, Chaliapin that of Bartolo—but the entire surroundings of the actors are also transformed, now a township emerging on the wooden platform of the stage, now a copse or the outline of the seashore.

And the applause of the spectator who is fascinated by the miracle of transformation is frequently aroused not so much by the contents of the play as by striking evidence of the creative process which goes on the stage.

He applauds the actor for his interpretation of a scene, the singer for holding out the fermato in his aria, a happy improvisation of

clouds floating across the backdrop, of rolling billows on the seaside and even the gleam of moonlight in the décor.

In the cinema applause is stimulated only by the story itself and never by any such thing as the floating of clouds or the moonlight. The reason for this is simple enough. On the screen there is no transformation, no miracle. The clouds, the waves and the moon are real.

Analyze the difference in your reaction to a show on the stage and on the screen and you will make some startling discoveries. First, you will realize how strongly averse you are to the least evidences of the artificial on the screen: a painted scene, and other makeshifts, vaseline drops for beads of perspiration on the hero's face are quite enough to make us condemn them as striking a false chord in the picture. Therefore, when the cinema director does resort to the help of a painter or a property man, he does not want a portrayal of reality but an imitation, executed so well that the spectator may take it for an original.

On the other hand, were a play director to set his scene with real trees and real fern, the incongruity of it would strike us at once, for on the screen we expect to see the original, on the stage we expect to see artistic representation of the original.

Whenever we watch a house catch fire on the screen we know that it is a real fire. But on the stage should we for a moment suspect a real fire we would make a dash for the exit. This difference in reaction holds good for the characters as well as for scenery and inanimate objects.

There may be, for example, a film calling for a hunchback in the cast and should you notice that the man impersonating him wears an artificial hump you would immediately feel done out of something and the story would lose much in veracity.

Exactly the opposite is true of the spectator's reaction in the theatre.

Imagine a play in which one of the characters is a hunchback, the *Hunchback of Nôtre Dame*, for example. Here the sudden realization that the man impersonating him is a real hunchback will make one feel ill at ease and at once detract from the convincingness of the performance.

Has it ever occurred to you that a character in a motion picture may consume a whole barrel of beer and arouse not a shade of doubt in your mind. But should an actor on the stage draw a draught of champagne from his glass you are at once tortured by the thought whether the drink is tea or just ordinary soda water. This happens because the spectator subconsciously separates the character from the actor who impersonates the character, and here it is obvious enough that the champagne is going down the throat of the actor and not the hero.

In the theatre the art of representation reigns supreme and therein it is distinctly different from the screen. All the components of the theatre are elements of representation, and only that is genuinely organic in the theatre which undergoes transformation. A dog, a cat, a fairy, satan, the angels, God, may all be impersonated by the cast. Ample examples of this may be found in the *Blue Bird, Demon, Midsummer Night's Dream.*

In this respect film production is poles apart from the stage. The cinema does not give a "representation" of life but "shows" real life. Portrayal in the cinema is the result of a sum total of facts. A combination of real water, real sky and real human beings may serve to create a picture of war but each of the animate or inanimate objects is factual and not improvised. Hence, on the screen a cat may be shown but not played, just as one cannot play angels, devils or God with success on the screen.

For this reason stories with fantastic, allegoric or abstract subjects are, it seems to me, not fit for the cinema. And failures in this direction are not to be laid at the door of the director but are a result of the cinema's deficiency in this respect. It is worthwhile recalling Alexander Korda's *Thief of Bagdad.* What won success for this film was its exotic scene and thrilling story (I am not alluding to taste, for here the picture falls short). As a fairy tale the picture is a complete failure. Magnifying a man forty times his natural size does not turn him into a Djinn. The difference between a mortal and a spirit is one of quality and not quantity, the very quality that makes him a supernatural being makes him lose the reality of being. Consequently he cannot be "shown" but only "represented" in the words of the poet, in the design of an artist, in the sculptor's marble, the actor's performance.

A Djinn that is "shown" and not "represented" loses the very quality which makes him a fairy-tale character, acquires real existence and ceases to be a spirit. A person of monstrous size with fleshy buttocks in a pair of indecent shorts is certainly more of a pathological phenomenon than a character out of a fairy tale.

So averse is the art of the cinema to conventional representation that were the ordinary speech of the cast substituted by such conventional forms as singing, pantomime, ballet gestures, the integrity of the film would be broken. This explains why screen versions of operas are generally failures. On the stage the opera heroine, in the midst of a conventional opera décor of painted trees, snow and cottages sings her aria with success but to stand in real snow, by the side of a real cottage and hold forth in the language of song is quite out of question.

It seems to me that the conclusions to be drawn are clear enough. There is, however, still another problem which I have not touched upon yet. That is the functions of and the place to be occupied by the puppet show and the animated cartoon film.

Both these forms of art—puppets and animated cartoons—are, first of all, arts of representation. This is what distinguishes them from the motion picture shot from life. In what way is the art of the puppet show and the animated cartoon different from the art of representation in the theatre?

To give the most direct reply to this question one may say that the actor on the stage is a living actor, whereas in the puppet show and in the animated cartoon film a sort of moving statue or a drawing do the acting. Why have such a substitute at all, what qualities, if any, may it possess that the human actor does not? The answer is that the doll or cartoon may perform a number of physical movements which the living actor cannot. There are, for example, the possibilities of a rapid change of form in the cartoon; the cartoon-actor may change in size, get fat, reduce, move about in a hundred different ways, his legs stretched through the whole length of the screen and then in a flash brought back to normal. The head of the wooden doll may be severed and then joined again.

Though all these eccentric possibilities exist and may be utilized, that is not the most important thing about the art of the puppet show and the animated cartoon. To impress the audience it is not at all necessary to have the doll lose its head. All it needs is to sit down on a chair, cross its legs and light a cigarette, that is, perform the most ordinary actions, and yet rouse the house.

What makes the audience respond at once is that each of the puppet's actions really becomes a symbol. The power of representation possessed by the puppet and animated cartoon is enormous because of the abstractness of these two forms of art. To the audience the cartoon-actor and the doll are, first of all, inanimate so that their attempt to appear animate are all the more effective. The puppet and cartoon-actor do not play themselves but beings, as it were, diametrically opposed to them.

The law of art is such that the more the material is unlike that which it portrays, the more effective will the marvel of the transformation be. On the other hand, the nearer the material is to that into which it is to be transformed the less effective its transformation, and no effect whatever is produced when the material coincides exactly with that which it is supposed to represent. In that case, it simply does not represent anything but remains its original self. To make a match box represent a match box is absurd. Herein lies the difference between "showing" and "representing." One may simply "show" a match box, whereas a match box may serve to "represent" a man if you stick into it a pair of matches at the top for arms and at the bottom for legs. Also, a match box may serve as a boat if you attach a sail to it. Playing cards may be used to represent a house, a tent, a fence, a blanket but they cannot represent themselves.

Hence if this be accepted as an axiom, and to argue against it seems quite futile to me, then it follows that the human actor cannot impersonate human beings in general for he is a human being himself.

At first glance this may seem quite absurd. Do not human actors act the part of human beings in the theatre? The rule seems to hold good for the match box and the logic of it is quite clear, yet when applied to the human actors it appears to be sheer nonsense. But it is not nonsense. Human actors do not impersonate human beings in general, as a species, but always a definite kind or type of human being. Moskvin played a mayor without, of course, being one himself. All his impersonations were miracles of artistry because each role was miles away from his own character. While he is working on his role, the actor is concerned with forming his own characteristic features into a new combination which would best help him to act another person on the stage. In the theatre where human actors perform, the simple act of walking about the stage or sitting down on a chair is not likely to produce any reaction among the audience as something unusual. But these simple actions when performed by dolls or cartoon-actors

appear remarkable. Thus by the artless act of walking or sitting down the inanimate puppet—even before it begins its characterization of a definite role—becomes a marvel because it is impersonating a human being. It is this that lends a great force of expressiveness to the puppet as well as to the animated cartoon-actor.

Fundamentally speaking, the portrayal of man and his immediate surroundings constitutes the principal object of all art.

We know that every art is conventional but the conventional takes on different forms and there are different methods of the penetration of life.

There are cases when the artist describes probable persons and places them in probable circumstances. This applies to numerous products of the artistic imagination. Notable artists who used this method are—Chekhov, Tolstoy, Ostrovsky, Balzac, Molière, Fedotov, Repin.

On the other hand, the artist, writer or director may choose improbable personages and place them in probable environment, or probable personages in an improbable environment, or, as the case may be, both the characters and circumstances may be improbable. These categories are widely represented and include almost all forms of folklore, Dante, Homer, Swift, Krylov, Lafontaine, partly Gogol and Saltykov-Shchedrin, Granville, Doré, the Kukryniksy.

It is difficult to find the correct terms for these two methods. It may be possible to call the first method the "art of the probable," and the second the "art of the improbable."

Is there any antagonism between these two different methods of portraying life?

Gogol, for example, used the two different methods in *Dead Souls* and *The Nose*. Saltykov-Shchedrin also tried his hand at both these methods: *Golovlyov Family* and *Dumbbell City*. So did Shakespeare in *Othello* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

If these two methods are sometimes used by the same artist it only proves that he had come to the conclusion that in a given situation only one of the two methods may be applied but not either. This shows that both methods are equally important as one cannot be replaced by the other.

If this conclusion is a correct one then it is clear that the puppet show and the animated cartoon occupy a place in the realm of the art similar to that which Swift or Krylov hold in the world of letters or Granville, Doré or the Kukryniksy in the sphere of painting and graphic art. Wherein is the main force of the "art of the improbable?" In the broadness of its power of generalization and in the fact that the idea is brought home in a distinct and clear-cut portrayal. It is therefore no wonder that the heroes of such works of art so often become household words as is the case with Gulliver, Gargantua, Reynard the Fox, Kashchei the Deathless. It is easy enough to ascertain by a few comparisons the laws that make a character a broadly generalized type.

Imagine Anna Karenina meeting Sholokhov's Aksinia. Notwithstanding the fact that these two Russian women lived in different periods in the country's history and their social status was quite different, still, they would find some things in common. However, Anna Karenina and Aksinia would stand comparison even if they had much less in common. But to imagine a meeting between Tartaglia and Platon Karatayev is impossible. They could not exchange two words. They are two types generalized in quite a different manner so as to make them incommensurable. The varying degrees of generalization are not due to the perfection or defects of the two types, but to their different functions.

Drawn with great vividness and penetration with an abundance of detail, Natasha Rostova is one of the great characters of Russian fiction. We know everything about her from her appearance to the innermost secrets of her soul. Indeed, should we have happened to chance upon her in the street we would have surely recognized her as we would have recognized the Princess Bolkonskaya or Pierre. Sure enough Natasha Rostova represents a general type and there are scores of girls who are like her in many ways. But this typification is quite different from the method which, for example, Shakespeare uses for Desdemona. Very few of her individual qualities are known to us but at the same time she represents a broader type of womanhood than Natasha, represents a greater number of women.

Does that mean that as a character Desdemona is more interesting than Natasha? Certainly not, the difference is in the functions which they are called upon to perform.

None can portray such characters like Natasha better than the Art Theatre because of its ability to see and depict the peculiar individual qualities. Here, it must be remembered that when an actor of the Art Theatre rehearses a role it is suggested to him to visualize not only the particular period in which

the character is acting but the life that preceded that period as well.

However, this method of stressing the individual qualities will not stand in good stead the actor who plays Othello or Juliet. Too much stress on the individual qualities is bound to lead to a destruction of the portrait of the general type. It is all right for Karenin to be near-sighted and for the actor who impersonates him to bring Anna's letter right up to his nose. That would not contradict Tolstoy, on the contrary it gives a more convincing, realistic touch to the portrayal. But it would certainly do infinite harm to a portrayal of Othello were he pictured a near-sighted man and had to bring Desdemona's handkerchief close to his face. This would rob Othello of the power of typifying.

When the young actors of the Vakhtangov Theatre showed Vakhtangov what they had done with the *Princess Turandot* he realized at once that the modern method of psychological characterization would not hold good at all for Gozzi. All the beauty of the play which hangs on conventional types and situations is driven out and a false note brought in. It was then that Vakhtangov suggested impersonation not of the heroes of the play but of the actors who play them. In this way the individual characteristics of the actors were playfully brought out and the naiveté and conventionality of the characters in the fairy tale was emphasized.

Were the characters of Gozzi made to live the full-blooded existence which characters in general live on the stage of the Moscow Art Theatre, they would certainly prove too broadly drawn, too fragile to stand such weight, and would fall apart.

Some time ago Walt Disney's *Bamby* was on show in Moscow, a picture without any human beings. Deer are the main characters of the film. They live the habitual life of their kind, walk about on their four legs, graze, and by straining their neck and ears and leaping they react to the life around them. They are mere deer. At the same time it is a picture about people, people in general and not any particular characters or types. Disney's doe, her life traced from babyhood to full maturity, represents to us in the succeeding stages of her growth a baby girl, a young girl, a girl in love, a wife, a mother. She is neither a blonde nor a brunette, French or Spanish. There is not a trace of the individual about her. She personifies a woman in general, a girl in general, and a mother in general.

There are many shortcomings in *Bamby*. The picture lacks integrity of style, there are a number of badly chosen shots, and there is disharmony in the directing. Yet it is a powerful picture, and its power lies in its typification, in its representation of types that appeals fully to the audience, that makes them really laugh and really cry.

The very fact that the animated cartoon has come to occupy its place in film production speaks for the fact that this form of art is as inevitable as the "improbable" in literature, no matter what our attitude may be to the "inanimate form".

Those who claim that the cinema is not in a position to take upon itself the functions of the theatre and that the large number of cinema houses will in no way affect the life of the theatre suffer from blindness common to some professionals and which often leads to mistakes. Unwillingness or inability to understand the correlation of forces gives rise to unnecessary rivalry between the theatre and the cinema precisely in that field where the cinema is strongest. The cinema is a great master of mass scenes and so the theatre in its desire not to lag behind the cinema brings whole regiments out upon the stage, dragging horses, machine guns and even tanks upon the scene. And so the stage becomes crowded, the horses beat their hoofs, the coulisses, with the heavy motor cars near them, seem on the point of collapse, and still the scene is a failure in comparison to what can be accomplished on the screen with very little difficulty. The theatre in this respect is certainly no match for the cinema.

And so must the cinema remain supreme master in the realm of the real. The theatre, equipped with a host of spotlights, vainly attempts to have "real" clouds, "real" waves, a "real" fire. Nor can the cinema be outdone when it comes to a dynamic subject demanding quick action and change of scene. Here, too, the theatre strives to catch up with the cinema by constructing complicated sets which revolve now in one side and now in another — the spotlights trying to highlight fragments of the action on the stage, obviously imitating the "close-up" of the screen. The play is broken up into numerous fragments. All this, however, is unavailing—it is impossible to ensure continuity of action, and the time tempo is constantly being broken up. The close-ups, too, are not convincing and, more often than not, are not properly seen by the audience. And what happens in the end is that the audience

feels cheated. It has come to see a play and what is shown to it is a poor film script.

The theatre demonstrates its helplessness there where the cinema cannot but score complete victory. There is no reason for the theatre to try to keep pace with the cinema here because it will never be able to do it. Those who do so, obviously do not understand where the border lines must be drawn between these two arts and that mechanically to adopt one another's methods is a gross error. I do not understand, for example, how a writer can suggest the same story for the theatre and the cinema. How can he expect it to take shape in these two different artistic mediums. Surely he knows that it can be best suited to only one of these forms of art and will not bring success in both. It is therefore, either from sheer thoughtlessness or unscrupulousness that he submits it to both.

The direct mutual contact, enjoyed by actor and audience in the theatre, is one of the theatre's greatest assets and must be valued by theatre workers who must stop spending so much of their energy in trying to keep pace with the cinema. What they may learn from cinema people is their capacity to keep attuned to the times. There is another point to remember: whatever the great virtues of the classics, they will only help the theatre to strengthen its artistic positions but will not help it to forge ahead onto new ground. Therefore the theatre must emerge from its defence positions and sally forth to the attack. Had Shakespeare played Gozzi and Gozzi Aristophanes then I would like to know what we would have acted today. The classics became classics only because in their time they were modern in the fullest sense of the word. If we are able to see the new only in the cinema, then our theatre must cede positions which it has no right to cede.

On the other hand, will cinema lovers be hurt to the quick if they find out that the cinema is not in a position to command all the functions of all the other arts of the show? That would mean that they have not as yet grasped fully what great possibilities the cinema has. The cinema, because of the power of its "realness", because it is master of time and space, is bound to be on a close footing with literature, with the novel and great epic works.

Dramaturgy in the cinema is still in its infancy. There are, however, a number of scripts which rank as works of high literary merit untranslatable into the language of stage drama. In the near future scenario writing will break away altogether from the theatre. It will know all the beauty of drawing from a great and vigorous literature and will become a consummate art and not the stereotyped pseudodramaturgy of staff script writers. Do not all these possibilities give joy to cinema lovers? Can they possibly imagine that the broad road leading them to the future is narrow because the sides of the road are visible? The claim to omnipotence in any of the arts is absurd and can do nothing but impede the full development of that particular art.

Puppets may be used to show the romantic, heroic, legendary man with his transparent characteristics, splendid generalization; and they do not depict him coldly, abstractly but vigorously, emotionally so as to arouse real laughter or real tears in the audience. Puppets can play scenes from Dante's *Paradise*, they can play Tsarevich Ivan from the Russian fairy tales or Shot'ha Rust'hveli's *Knight in the Tiger's Skin*. And it is absurd to picture the characters of Ostrovsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov or Jack London's and Seaton Thompson's animals in a puppet show or in an animated cartoon film; it would be as equally absurd to shoot *Bamby* from life and have real animals act in the picture. It was this error that Korda committed in his *Mowgli*.

In conclusion, I must say that though I do not wish to turn prophet and predict when we shall see other evolutionary changes in the stage arts, I am confident that we shall witness these changes.

A re-equipment is under way, new strings are being drawn on, new, perhaps hitherto unknown, instruments are being born. It is interesting and for a professional important to keep track of this evolution, to see all the clearer what note to strike, what tune to play and on what instrument to play it, to find consummate form for the new content and to remember that there is only one perfect form for the new content and that there is but one perfect form to fit each particular content.

Formalism comes into being there where the sense for the truly adequate form is lost. As soon as this real and not "invented" form is found, formalism gives up the ghost. It is precisely inattention to form that makes the cinema produce what should be played in the theatre, the opera give us what we should see in the drama, and a puppet-show put on that which must be played by living actors. This diminishes the expressive force of each of these arts which are such mighty weapons of the education of man.

SERGEI OBRAZTSOV

878

NEWS AND VIEWS

LITERATURE

PUSHKIN HOUSE

The Leningrad Institute of Literature, now attached to the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., developed out of the Pushkin House, which was inaugurated in 1905 as an institution of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The Pushkin House, destined to become one of the great repositories of Pushkin manuscripts, derived the bulk of its treasures from the famous A. F. Onegin collection and from the poet's own library, acquired from his son, A. Pushkin, in 1906.

Besides Pushkin's manuscripts and books, the Pushkin House began to acquire collections of manuscripts and literary material belonging to other Russian poets, writers and public men.

After the October Revolution when the Pushkin House was transformed from an archive museum type of literary institution into an Institute of Literature under the Academy of Sciences, it became a centre of Soviet literary research.

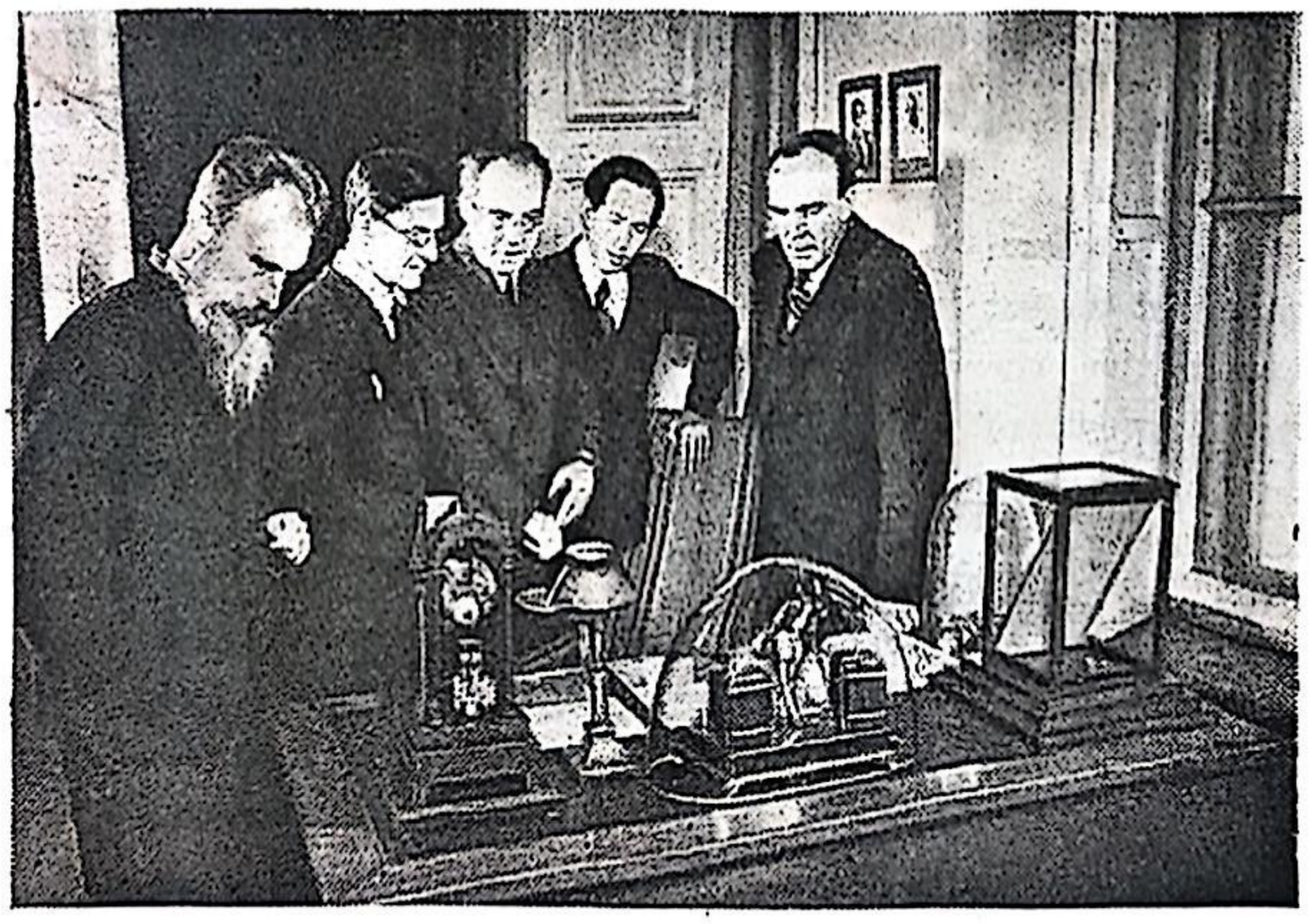
At the present time the institute has several departments of literary research: old Russian literature, modern Russian literature; Western literature, and folklore with folklore archives, phonogram archives and a galvano-plastic laboratory. The Pushkin, Gorky and Blok committees of the Academy of Sciences come under the institute's jurisdiction.

Two auxiliary research sections function at the institute. The manuscript section, numbering over 500,000 folios, ranks as one of the most important manuscript collections in the U.S.S.R. The other section is the Literary Museum, its main collection comprising some 50,000 items. Permanent exhibitions in the halls of this museum depict the life and work of the great Russian writers, Pushkin's last place of residence, known as the Pushkin Museum (12 Moika St.), N. A. Nekrasov's House-Museum and the Pushkin Memorial Park in the village of Mikhailovskoye, all come within the jurisdiction of the Literary Museum.

At the service of the institute's research workers is a library of special books on literature, containing over 300,000 volumes.

The principal task confronting the institute at present is the publication of a *History of Russian Literature*. This work of ten volumes, covering the period from ancient times to the October Revolution, was originally undertaken on the initiative of Maxim Gorky, who headed the institute in 1935. Among the prominent scholars on the editorial board are P. Lebedev-Polyansky, A. Orlov, M. Sholokhov, who are members of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. The first, second, third and fifth volumes of this copious history have already appeared, while volumes six and eight are in the press.

Another capital work now being written by a team of the institute's scholars is a *History of Russian Literary Criticism* in four volumes. Begun during the recent war (1943), this history presents a survey of Russian criticism from the beginning of the 18th century to the time of the October Revolution. This history, the first volume of which—*Birth of Russian Literary Criticism in the 18th Century*—has already been written, it is to be completed by 1948.



Pushkin's writing desk at the Pushkin House in Leningrad

Simultaneousiy the institute continues intensive work on its series of histories of West-European literature, begun before the Great Patriotic War.

In 1946 the first volume of a *History of French Literature* appeared, embracing the period from ancient times to the Revolution of 1789. The second volume, covering the history of French literature from the Revolution of 1789 to our day is ready for the press.

Russian Folklore, a three-volume work, is being compiled by the folklore department of the institute.

Besides these, the institute is publishing a number of monographs on important problems in the history of literature. Noteworthy among these are *Lenin and Problems of Russian Literature at the Turn of the 19th Century*, (B. Meilakh, Doctor of Philology). *Belinsky as a Literary Critic* (P. Lebedev-Polyansky), *The Kazakh Heroic Epos*, *Heroic Themes in Old Russian Literature* (A. Orlov), *A Survey of the Poetic Style of Old Russia* (V. Adrianova-Peretz, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences).

Deserving serious attention is *The Works of Shakespeare*, a monograph by A. Smirnov, Doctor of Philology, who shows Shakespeare as an exponent of the loftiest humanistic ideals conceivable in his time. While bringing home the ideological content of Shakespeare's work, the writer gives a detailed analysis of the English dramatist's style and craftsmanship. The last chapter contains a historical survey of the various interpretations of Shakespeare.

Also of considerable interest is a study of Voltaire by C. Derzhavin, Doctor of Philology.

The institute has its regular publications and periodicals dealing with literary research, as, for example, the Journal of the Pushkin Committee, the *Papers on Western Literature*, the *Bulletin of the Manuscript Section of the Institute of Literature*, the *Literary Legacy*.

The second volume of the *Papers on Western Literature* which came out in 1946 contains among others the following essays: *Shakespeare's Art*, by A. Smirnov, *Defoe and Problems of the Historical Novel*, by T. Alexeyev, and others.

The Institute of Literature devotes major attention to academic editions of the complete works of the Russian classics: Pushkin, Gogol, Lermontov, Belinsky, and others.

THEATRE

A POPULAR HERO

The season in the Moscow Kamerny Theatre opened with a new play *Constantine Zaslonov*, by Arkadi Movzon, a young Belorussian playwright.

The feat of engineer Zaslonov, Hero of the Soviet Union, is widely known throughout Belorussia and beyond its borders. On a dark October night in 1941, when the German troops were attacking the approaches to Moscow, a man came to the German commandant of the railway depot in Orsha and offered his services as senior engineer in the repair shops. This man was Constantine Zaslonov. Risking his life at every hour, he derailed train after train bound for Moscow. The work of the important Orsha junction was completely disorganized.

The playwright presents the story of Zaslonov's feat in stirring form. The action develops swiftly and is full of tense situations. At the same time, the young author has successfully avoided the pitfalls of a "mystery plot."

In the enemy rear, facing tortures and death, Soviet people behave like fighters and victors; the immeasurable moral superiority of Zaslonov and his friends over the Germans, who are doomed notwithstanding their temporary success, forms the basic theme of the play.

Zaslonov, as presented by the Kamerny Theatre (S. Bobrov), wins the sympathy of the audience by his calm dignity, his confidence in victory. On the other hand, the moral bankruptcy of Major Trautnitz of the Gestapo (N. Chaplygin) is obvious from the beginning. He is rapacious, cruel and merciless, and at the same time the weariness of death fetters all his actions and movements.

The cast offers excellent support to the leading roles.

THE GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE

The performance opens to the symphony of battle. Explosions, the bright flare of rockets, searchlights sweeping the sky, the barking voice of a German radio announcer—the Russian troops are at the approaches to a German town of Altenstadt.

Only a few more days, a few more desperate skirmishes, and the war will be over. Colonel Kuzmin of the Soviet Army, in civilian life an engineer in the distant city of Krasnoyarsk, who with his regiment has fought his way from Moscow to Berlin, is appointed commandant of Altenstadt, or as his general puts it: "the governor of the province."

This is the introduction to the play *The Governor of the Province* by the Tur brothers and L. Sheinin, produced by the Lenin Komsomol Theatre in Moscow.

The war is over, and Germany defeated. Nevertheless, another "war" continues. Colonel Kuzmin works under difficult conditions. He is not merely the administrator and governor of the city, he has to be diplomat, politician, psychologist, investigator and teacher of youth. The class differences, the grim underground struggle proceeding among the German population, fascist agents working under cover, spies, wreckers, "objective" American press representatives—such are some of the problems he has to tackle in his daily work.

The performance clearly reveals the fight put up by the hostile parties in post-war Germany. A convincing portrayal of the character of Kuzmin is given by the actor I. Bersenev. He is distinguished by the clarity of his outlook, his correct judgement, quiet courage, simplicity and modesty. The role of the American, Colonel Hill, is played with much sympathy and warmth by V. Bragin,

The Governor of the Province. *Scene from Act II*

who draws a skillful psychological picture of the road travelled by this man to a profound understanding of the events taking place around him. Professor Dietrich (A. Vovsi) also undergoes a deep psychological change in the course of the play.

FOR THE LITTLE ONES

Unlike other theatres, this one is filled with the merry voices of its audience long before sunset; here the children's shining eyes eagerly follow everything that happens on the stage. Recently the Moscow Theatre for the Young Spectator has staged Samuil Marshak's fairy tale *The Twelve Months*.

Once upon a time the 12 kind brothers, the months, lived happily all together; they followed each other in strict sequence, showering their gifts upon humanity. On New Year's Eve they all gathered around a festive bonfire, waiting for the New Year to be born. And on one such evening a little orphan girl came out of the forest and joined the brothers around the bonfire. She told them all about her misfortunes.

The country she came from was ruled over by a young queen of her own age. The queen was capricious and self-willed, there was no end to her whims; she even wanted to rule nature itself: she promised a mountain of gold to anyone who would bring her a basketful of snowdrops on New Year's Eve, and the little girl's cruel stepmother had driven her out into the cold, dark night in search of the tender spring flowers.

The warm-hearted and hard-working little girl becomes the sister of the twelve months who shower on her the gifts she deserves.

This fairy tale shows the young theatregoers how to penetrate into the magic world of nature. Nature herself rewards the deserving and punishes the ungrateful. The wonderful and unusual is not hidden in a magic world of wizards and castles-in-the-air—it is all around us, in real life, which is more wonderful than a fairy tale.

Producer P. Tsetnerovich and art designer Y. Stoffer have succeeded in skillfully re-enacting the poetical substance of Marshak's play.

NEW BALLET

Tatyana, a new ballet by the composer Alexander Krein, is the choreographic tale of a Soviet girl soldier who had been through some of the hardest engagements in the recent war. The scene of the ballet, produced by the Leningrad Theatre of Opera and Ballet, is laid in Leningrad's battle-scarred environs.

Vladimir Burmeister, the producer, has succeeded in translating a contemporary subject into the stirring and expressive language of the classic dance. Valentina Khodasevich, who designed the scenery, is most impressive in her panoramas of war-wrecked and later, of reconstructed Petrodvorets (Peterhof), one of Leningrad's most beautiful suburbs. Alexander Krein belongs to the older generation of Soviet composers and has had a long and fruitful career in the theatre. Tatyana Vecheslova in the title role dances her solo parts with a remarkable sincerity and a sense of the dramatic.

THEATRE OF KUZNETSK IRON AND STEEL WORKERS

The iron and steel workers of Kuznetsk, one of the U.S.S.R's major industrial regions, have a theatre of their own in Stalinsk, the centre of this region. The theatre was organized fourteen years ago, when the first blast furnace was fired in.

The repertoire of the theatre ranges from Shakespeare's *Othello* to modern pieces by Alexander Korneichuk, Valentin Katayev, Nikolai Pogodin and other Soviet playwrights.

Little Foxes by Lillian Hellman, the American authoress, is among the theatre's most successful productions.

CINEMA

MAYAKOVSKY AT HIS WRITING

In a short feature film, one of the *In the Realm of Soviet Art* series, an attempt is made to acquaint the public with the creative methods of the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky.

The screen gives a close-up of the poet's study, his desk littered with rough copy, endless manuscript pages with lines crossed out and rewritten, showing what an infinite capacity for painstaking work the poet possessed, how he never tired in his quest for the appropriate word.

A number of shots from old documentaries, incorporated in the picture, revive the image of the poet.

The difficulties of doing justice on the screen to the intricate process by which a poem comes into being are obvious. Yet this small feature film has succeeded very well in giving the public an idea of the effort and zeal that went into Mayakovsky's verse.

MOSCOW—U.S.S.R's CAPITAL

A bird's-eye view of the capital opens to a pilot whose destination is Moscow—the Red Square, the Kremlin hill overlooking the river, the broad-spaced central thoroughfares. . . Such are the opening shots of *Moscow—U.S.S.R's Capital*, a new Soviet documentary released in honour of Moscow's 800th birthday.

With documentary shots of pre-revolutionary Moscow happily incorporated in the film by directors L. Stepanova and F. Kisilyov, a picture is given of Moscow as it looked in the past with its tiny shops, tumble-down, squat dwellings and street traders' stalls lining the Red Square. In the suburbs the contrast between old and new Moscow is particularly striking. There is the old Simonov suburb, first shown with its muddy streets, rickety shacks and then the same suburb as it looks today with new blocks of tall, modern apartment houses and a huge recreation palace.

Glimpses of what Moscow will be like in the future constitute an interesting part of the picture.

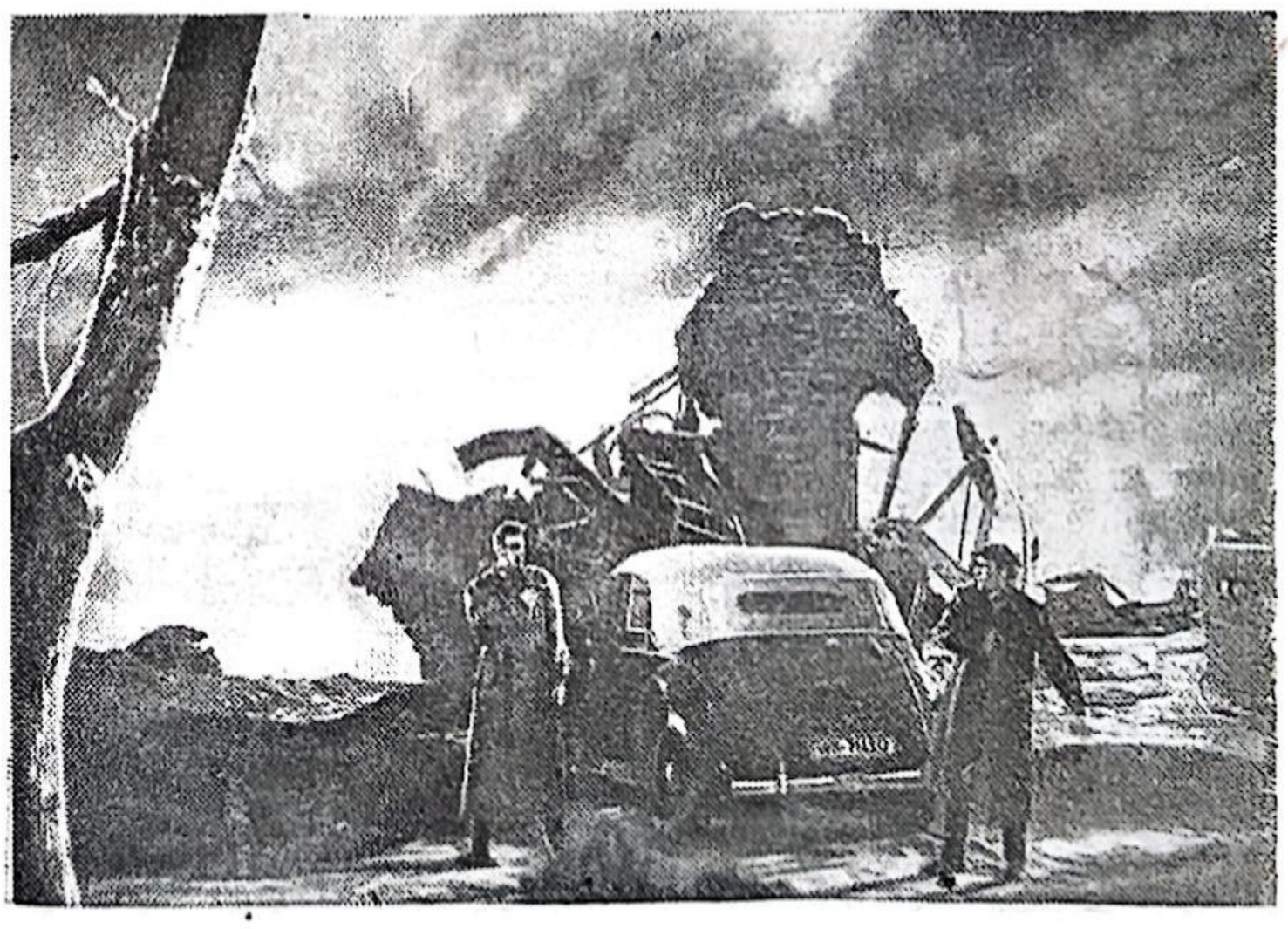
Scenes from Moscow's history are revived on the screen. Prince Dmitri Donskoy's army is shown leaving the Kremlin to deal a smashing blow to the Tatar hordes of Khan Mamai on the banks of the Nepryadva River. Then the invading Poles flee from the national levy led by Kuzma Minin and Dmitri Pozharsky. Moscow is seen wrapped in the flames of the great fire which spelled death to Napoleon's plans of conquest.

These shots are selected from historical films. But as the picture reverts to documentary material, Moscow of the grim autumn days of 1941 emerges on the screen, its snow-swept streets criss-crossed by barricades, anti-tank ditches and dugouts. The parade of the Soviet troops on the Red Square on November 7, 1941, is shown and then the scene shifts to another parade—Victory Parade, with the standards of defeated fascist Germany cast down at the foot of Lenin's tomb.

Tribute is paid to the citizens of Moscow, its builders, academicians, architects, college students, those who defended Moscow in time of war and are now transforming it into a new city.

SOVIET SCOUT SCORES

This is a new film about a Soviet intelligence officer, Major Fedotov, who is entrusted with a difficult and perilous mission of procuring the secret plans of the fascist command from a certain General Kühn who is in Hitler's confidence.



Shot from the film Soviet Scout Scores

Fedotov is an expert at his job but the odds are very much against him. He is up against the chief of the German intelligence service, a dangerous and experienced adversary. Left to act single-handed, Fedotov still succeeds by virtue of the fact that his actions are prompted by sincere, unfaltering devotion to his country. He outwits his adversaries, who are impelled by nothing but a thirst for personal power and money, afraid of death and mutually distrustful of each other.

The film was produced by Boris Barnet with Pavel Kadochnikov in the leading role.

MUSIC

HISTORY OF MUSICAL LIFE IN MOSCOW

An exhibition, tracing the musical life of Moscow from the 12th century to our day, was recently opened in the Chaikovsky Concert Hall foyers on the occasion of Moscow's octocentenary and has evoked great interest in Moscow's music circles.

Photographs of manuscripts written in Russian neumata (called hooks in Russian) alternate with engravings of scenes from Moscow's musical life in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries: the choral school in Moscow in the time of Tsar Ivan Grozny, orchestras of Russian serf musicians, old Russian folk instruments, pictures of Russia's early prima donnas (second half of the 18th century) and original designs for opera sets.

At the exhibition a broad picture of the rich musical life of Moscow in the 19th and early 20th centuries is given.

From the exhibition we learn that during the recent war some 2,500 Moscow musicians gave 100,000 front-line recitals for officers and men of the Soviet Army.

A series of photographs featuring musical Moscow in the days of the Great Patriotic War ends with a picture of a recital by Nina Emelyanova, winner of the Third World Chopin Piano Contest at Warsaw (in 1938) at an open-air concert, held in one of Moscow's squares on May 9, 1945.

ARTS

U. S. S. R. ACADEMY OF ARTS FORMED

The Academy of Arts of the R.S.F.S.R. recently became the Academy of Arts of the U.S.S.R. The small body devoted exclusively to the teaching of the arts in the Russian Federation is now an academic centre for art research, uniting all eminent artists in the sphere of painting, sculpture and graphic art and all of the Soviet Union's leading scholars in these fields.

The primary purpose of the new academy is to promote the development of the fine arts and foster the best progressive traditions of the art of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.

Closely linked with this is the scientific side of the academy's work. A special research institute devoted to the theory and history of fine arts is being organized within the academy to study the vital esthetic problems of our day, elaborate questions bearing on the history of Russian and Western art and to popularize Soviet fine arts in the U.S.S.R. and abroad.

A firm stand against formalism, naturalism and other forms of decadent art, against pseudo-scientific, idealistic theories in the field of esthetics will mark the new academy's research activities.

The new academy will also have the important task of supervising the training of young talent. Two of the country's largest art schools come within its jurisdiction: the Moscow State Arts Institute and the Leningrad Repin Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. At these schools post-graduate studies covering various fields of art and art research will be organized on a broad scale. Arrangements are being made to place studios, libraries and museum collections at the disposal of the art students.

Questions bearing on the technique of various art media (mosaic, fresco, oil, water colour, stone carving, metalwork, polygraphic reproduction), as well as the technology of the materials used (canvas, ground, paints, etc.) are to be thoroughly studied and worked out at the academy.

The Academy of Arts of the U.S.S.R. is composed of a body of members of the academy — academicians, honorary members, corresponding members, research workers, professors and other specialists. The membership body must not exceed 45 academicians and 25 corresponding members. Only artists or art scholars who have works of art or books on art of outstanding significance to their credit are eligible for membership of the academy. Artists and art scholars of the U.S.S.R. as well as of other countries who have enriched the fine arts by works of world significance may be elected as honorary members of the academy.

In the first membership body of the new academy are twenty-eight of the most eminent painters, sculptors and graphic artists of the Union republics of the U.S.S.R. Among them are: V. Baksheyev, V. Byalinitsky-Biryulya, A. Gerasimov, S. Gerasimov, I. Grabar, A. Deineka, B. Ioganson, P. Konchalovsky, A.Plastov, M.Saryan, F. Fyodorovsky C. Yuon, V. Yakovlev (painters) T. Zalkaln, M. Manizer, S. Merkurov, V. Mukhina, Y. Nikoladze (sculptors), P. Krylov, M. Kuprianov, N. Sokolov (Kukryniksy team), I. Pavlov, M. Toidze (graphic artists).

Alexander Gerasimov, the painter, is president of the Academy of Arts of the U.S.S.R. and the two vice-presidents are the sculptor Matvei Manizer and Fyodor Fyodorovsky, one of the country's oldest scenic artists.

Editor-in-chief: ALEXANDER KARAGANOV